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FIVE COLLEGE DEPOSITORY

FACILITATING AND HINDERING FACTORS PERTAINING TO
COMPLETION OF AN ASSOCIATE DEGREE OR CERTIFICATE
PROGRAM: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF SELECTED
WELFARE WOMEN IN A COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEM

A Dissertation Presented

by

MARY REMONA MARTIN

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

May 1993

School of Education

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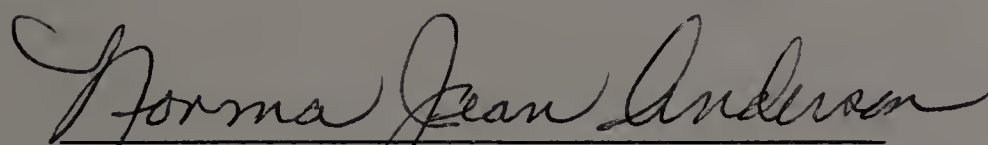
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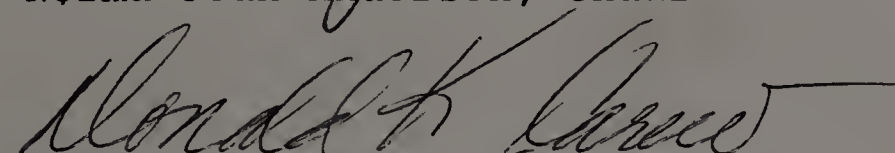
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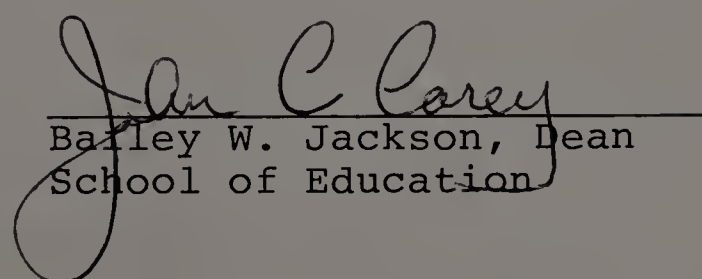
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ABSTRACT

FACILITATING AND HINDERING FACTORS PERTAINING TO
COMPLETION OF AN ASSOCIATE DEGREE OR CERTIFICATE
PROGRAM: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF SELECTED
WELFARE WOMEN IN A COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEM

MAY, 1993

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Directed by: Professor Norma Jean Anderson

A new national welfare reform, Family Support Act of 1988, has created relentless pressure among Welfare organizations to provide training for its recipients in preparation to make the transition from welfare to the work force. This reform mandates that all recipients (most of whom are women) whose youngest children are three years of age and are not exempted for other reasons participate in vocational training or basic skills education. One of the major components of the reform is an education assistance program. Typically, the aid consists of child care, transportation, and, in some cases, books. This new Act will make eligible tens of thousands of welfare recipients to enroll in vocational and basic skills programs.

In Connecticut, the Welfare organization has endorsed many of their recipients' selection of a community college for educational training. Like most other community college systems, Connecticut offers a wide variety of vocational degree and certificate programs that are linked to its community work force needs.

For factors unknown, some welfare students do not remain in college to the point of completing their programs. The purpose of this study was to examine the facilitating and hindering factors for women on welfare who are enrolled in community colleges under the benefits of the Welfare Assistance Program.

A qualitative, phenomenological study using in-depth, semi-structured personal interviewing as a research method was used to collect data. The study was conducted with a small group of selected welfare women students from four community colleges.

The data were analyzed for constructing composite profiles of the participants, and for identifying significant themes. Most notably, three hindering factors that are paramount to the success of the education reform were not only recurring themes but, even more significantly, fixable. Broadly, the themes were "Ineffective Communication", "Negative Attitudes of Welfare Service Personnel", and "Insensitivity of Faculty and Administrators".

Finally, recommendations for further research were made, including a comparative study with male students and a study that would examine the issues and concerns of students who have completed their vocational training and are in transition to the work force.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iv
ABSTRACT	vi
LIST OF TABLES	xi
LIST OF FIGURES	xii
 Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION	1
Statement of the Problem	1
Purpose of the Study	3
Significance of the Study	5
Limitations of the Study	6
Definition of Terms	7
2. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE	9
Introduction	9
Historical Overview of Social Welfare	9
History and Mission of Community Colleges	16
The Newest Welfare Reform and Its Effect on Community Colleges	20
New Issues Facing Community Colleges	23
Other Research Studies	28
3. STUDY DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY	30
Introduction	30
Reason for Choosing a Phenomenological Study	30
Sample Population	33
Selection Process for Participants	33
Criteria for Participation in the Study	34
Selecting the Participant Group	38
Method of Data Collection	39
Interpretation and Data Analysis	46
Presentation of Results	47

4. PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS	49
Introduction	49
Composite Profiles Overview	50
Composite Profile Group One:	
Age 20 to 25	51
Composite Profile Group Two:	
Age 26 to 30	57
Composite Profile Group Three:	
Age 31 to 45	64
Characteristics of Participant Profiles . . .	70
Themes	70
Research Questions	75
Hindering Factors	77
Facilitating Factors	94
What a College Experience Means to Welfare	
Students	101
Suggestions for Change	105
Profile No. 1: Age Group 20 to 25	105
Profile No. 2: Age Group 26 to 30	108
Profile No. 3: Age Group 31 to 45	112
5. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS	115
Summary	115
Conclusions	120
Recommendations	127
Reform	127
Further Research	131
APPENDICES	134
A. PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM	135
B. PARTICIPANT SIGN-UP SHEET TO INTERVIEW	
FOR A RESEARCH PROJECT	138
C. PARTICIPANT INFORMATION FORM	140
D. INTERVIEW GUIDE	143
BIBLIOGRAPHY	146

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Participant Profile Characteristics	40
2. Composite Profile No. 1: Age Group 20 to 25	52
3. Composite Profile No. 2: Age Group 26 to 30	58
4. Composite Profile No. 3: Age Group 31 to 45	65

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1. Age of the youngest child/children	71
2. Number of children in the family	72
3. Pre-college grade level of participants	73
4. Percentage of participants in each age category	74

C H A P T E R 1

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

Most community colleges have a mission statement that proclaims their commitment to providing high quality comprehensive educational and extracurricular opportunities to meet the diverse needs of all its students with consideration for age, ethnic backgrounds, and preparation for college. It also proposes to support the economic health of the business community by training workers and ordinary citizens in vocational skills and basic general education.

Aronson (1991) wrote in an annual report for the Job Connection Program in Connecticut that welfare recipients, commonly known as Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), is one of the recent fast-growing subcultures that is entering or reentering community colleges in Connecticut and across the nation. Primarily, this action is happening in order to comply with the new requirements for the Job Opportunities and Basic Skills (JOBS) Program under the National Family Support Act of 1988. This Act mandates that all recipients (up to 90 percent of whom are women) whose youngest children are age three and are not exempted for other reasons must participate in vocational training or general education programs.

This is the first major education reform since the beginning of welfare in 1825. For the most part, welfare has been a low-income maintenance program with little or no support or preparation for the client to eliminate dependence on income maintenance and enter the world of work. Aronson (1991) reports that the Family Support Act of 1988 sets new directions in federal policy towards employment programs for AFDC recipients by emphasizing the importance of education, and encouraging states to provide education to young parents and other recipients with inadequate education. However, Aronson's study of the Job Connection Training Program in Connecticut, an agency that works with the welfare organizations to coordinate training for its clients, found that approximately 60 percent of this population did not have a high school diploma and nearly 20 percent did not complete eighth grade. In this connection, Stein (1988) found that over 50 percent of AFDC recipients in Massachusetts had less than a high school education. Many other recipients who qualify for training have obsolete skills.

Blumenstyk (1988) contends that in more and more states, two-year colleges are asked to teach adults to read and to learn other basic skills. She said that state leaders are increasingly handing the responsibility for adult literacy teaching to community colleges--a major issue for these colleges to struggle with. The critical

question is whether community colleges can be all things to all students.

According to Jaschik (1988), this sweeping overhaul of the nation's welfare system will make eligible tens of thousands of AFDC recipients to enroll in basic skills programs at community colleges across the nation. Prior to this Bill, states usually discouraged AFDC recipients from going to college. For the most part, they were counseled into short-term, dead-end vocational programs (Gold, 1990).

In Connecticut and in some other states, the Welfare Organization has endorsed the selection of many of their recipients of a community college for educational training for a number of reasons: They specialize in vocational programs; they are community-based convenient; the cost of training is not prohibitive; and this reform provides educational assistance for up to three years, which is enough time to earn an associate degree or vocational certificate.

Purpose of the Study

For factors unknown, a good many Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) women students do not remain in college to the point of completing their desired degree or certificate program. The purpose of this study was to

develop a comprehensive understanding and to make meaning of their college experience as it relates to facilitating and hindering factors pertaining to completing an associate degree or certificate program.

This researcher concluded that an effective way to achieve this goal was through a phenomenological study with a small group of selected AFDC community college women students. These women were asked to reconstruct their experiences with both the Welfare and the community college organizations during in-depth, semi-structured interviews. Predetermined research questions were used to guide the process.

A quantitative experimental study would not reveal the kind of information necessary for this study regarding the realities of an experience of another human being, nor would it be able to indicate how that person thinks and feels about that experience. Schutz (1967), the originating author of phenomenology, states that the social world is understood through another's stream of consciousness. This in-depth, semi-structured interviewing process required these women to reflect, interpret, and talk about their experiences as they lived them. This provided a favorable chance of perceiving the reality experienced by another person or the "insider's" point of view as can occur.

Significance of the Study

This study will enable others to share the experience of an element in our society as it was lived in a way not known before. The Education Welfare Reform Bill of 1988, permitting up to three years of college education assistance for its recipients, was not implemented in most states until 1989-1990. This means that very little research has been done on the effects the Bill has had on the lives of AFDC clients; in fact, the literature review did not reveal a single comprehensive study of this type.

A key assumption is that if a selected group of women spoke openly about their lives as welfare recipients while attending a community college under the benefits of this new Bill, the following would occur. The researcher would comprehend more about this experience, and would be capable of understanding some of the facilitating and hindering factors of these and other such students as they reflected, interpreted, and discussed their experience. This information will add to the knowledge that will help community colleges and the Welfare organizations to respond more effectively to the needs of these students. Relevant understanding and subjective meaning of that experience may be useful in implementing the massive Welfare Reform Bill, and in making necessary changes in the organizational structure of service delivery for community colleges and

the welfare system. It will identify the excellent college policies and practices. It will serve as an indicator for areas of change for effective training and learning. It will undoubtedly reveal implications for change in the administrative structure and possibly the mission for community colleges. Finally, this study will give voice to an element in our society seldom permitted, such as opportunity.

Limitations of the Study

The study was conducted with Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) students from four community colleges in Connecticut. Since only one state was involved in the study, it makes the study generalizable only to states similar to Connecticut. Another limitation of the phenomenological, in-depth interviewing as a research technique is that it limits the sample size to a small group because of the time factor involved. According to the literature review, this small sample is the most comprehensive of any research that deals with AFDC students who were attending a community college. It will significantly contribute to the State's knowledge base relative to educating AFDC students in a community college.

The study's internal validity is also limited since random sampling or cluster sampling were not conducted;

the interviewees were all volunteers because they had to first give consent to be interviewed. According to Borg and Gall (1989), volunteer subjects are likely to be a biased sample of the target population. Volunteers have been found in many studies to differ from non-volunteers.

Definition of Terms

The following glossary of terms was developed to insure the readers' understanding of the way in which terms were used throughout this study:

Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC):

Aid extended beyond income maintenance to also include work incentive programs, with education, job training and work activities (Romig, 1989).

Community Colleges: Open-door public colleges usually without residency that offer two years of education beyond high school (Monroe, 1976).

Education/Training: For the purpose of this research study, it consists of vocational programs and services that are designed to meet the State's mandate to train AFDC recipients (Aronson, 1991).

Income Maintenance: Financial assistance to those in need who meet certain eligibility guidelines so that they might obtain the necessities of daily life consistent with health aid decency (Crockett, 1981).

Phenomenology: The study of human experiences during which consideration of objective reality is obtained by adopting the "insider's" point of view (Borg & Gall, 1989).

Profile: A biographical description construed from information selected from participant interviewing; the content must preserve the dignity of the respondent and reflect an accurate account of the interviews as a whole (Seidman, 1985).

Semi-Structured Interview: A set of open-ended questions asked from an interview guide, and each question can be followed by a clarifying probe question (Borg & Gall, 1989).

Welfare Education Reform Act of 1988: The Welfare Education Reform Act of 1988 includes several child care provisions and requirement for education/training for AFDC recipients with children over three years of age. Also, states have the option of requiring participation of parents with one- and two-year-old children. All states were mandated to implement the program by October 1, 1990 (Romig, 1989).

C H A P T E R 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

This chapter provides an historical overview of the development of social welfare and a brief description of the national welfare reforms. The most recent welfare education reform and its affect on community colleges and Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) students is presented. An abbreviated history and the mission of community colleges and some of the issues that the colleges are dealing with are also included. Finally, previous studies relating to women in college are introduced.

Historical Overview of Social Welfare

Since its inception in 1825, social welfare through taxation has been and continues to be a metamorphosis process. McClellan and Reese (1988) reported that New York State started the process by passing the first law mandating poorhouses for juvenile vagrants and delinquents. Massachusetts quickly endorsed the public relief philosophy by opening the first state hospital for the mentally ill in 1933.

The New York Poor Laws of the early 1930s intended outdoor relief be provided to support the old or sick people who could not be placed in an indoor poorhouse (Katz, 1986). The concept of aiding the needy outside institutions soon spread to many states. Initially, it served to tide people over during periods of unemployment, prevent starvation, and speed tramps on their way. Outdoor relief became so popular in New York, reports Katz (1986), that Brooklyn was referred to as "the paupers' paradise" around 1850.

The relief rolls grew rather slowly between 1850 to the distressful winter of 1865 which followed the ending of the Civil War that left thousands unemployed, wounded, or sick. The relief rolls experienced a quick jump during this time, then leveled off until the depression of 1875 when the rolls for indoor and outdoor relief grew in leaps and bounds. Yet, according to Katz's (1986) chronology, the money spent on relief did not grow as fast as the number aided. Aid was almost never cash; rather, aid usually consisted of food or coal, but never both during the same week. Only family heads, usually men, could apply for relief, and each family of four could receive only one dollar's worth of food or fuel for a week. This was a pitiful amount to offer the poor if compared to even an unskilled laborer who, at that time, could be expected to earn \$1.00 per day.

One of the greater fears of social welfare was that it would disconnect and break up families which would shift the extended family obligation to institutions for surrogate parenting. This fear had become a reality by the late nineteenth century. No longer did parents need to commit a crime, act immorally, or abuse their offspring before welfare authorities stepped in and removed their children to an asylum or poorhouse of sorts. This basic theory during this era gave rise to the notion that if men and women could not support their children they must be kept separate, and that there should be no more children born to that couple. This mandate, according to Katz (1986), was based on the R. L. Dugdale Study in 1878 that allegedly proved how degradation and pauperism transmitted themselves from one generation to another, and that Dugdale received reinforcement on the same point from Charles Hoyt in 1881, who argued that when parents asked for relief, they should cede their natural rights to the state. Further, imprudent and indolent parents often produced large families for the pretext of outdoor aid.

At the close of the poorhouse period, the late nineteenth century, one could say that the welfare system had failed miserably. It broke up families, according to Sidel (1986), by herding the old and the young, the sick and the well, the sane and the insane, the epileptic and the feeble-minded, the blind and the alcoholic, the

juvenile delinquent and the hardened criminal, the male and the female, all thrown together in institutions funded from government taxation. Nakedness and filth, hunger and vice, and other abuses, such as beatings by cruel keepers, were not uncommon in many of these wretched places. Vice catchalls for everyone in need was defined by one reformer as "living tombs" and by another as social cemeteries. This account is evident that little attention was paid to the conditions of these institutions; outside relief was under attack and there were disputes about how to best care for the poor. All this, coupled with the lack of policies and strategies about how to effectively administer welfare programs, led to further organizational change.

Sidel (1986) is a renowned spokesperson for AFDC recipients, the modern-day counterpart to the first poor-house benefactors. To this end, the next chronology of events in the development of social welfare will be presented from her published works. In the early 1900s, social reformers began to be concerned about the widespread practice of removing children from their own homes. This led to a resolution passed by the first White House Conference on the Care of Dependent Children in 1909 which stated, "Home life is the highest and finest product of civilization. It is a molding force of mind and character. Children should not be deprived of it except for urgent and compelling reasons; or in unusual

circumstances, the home should not be broken up for reasons of poverty." Clearly, this was a major departure from the original philosophy of social welfare.

The solution of 1909 led to the support for some kind of public aid to mothers and children. However, there was much concern that the money not relieve fathers of their financial obligation to support their children. Despite the concern and many debates on this issue, widespread support for aiding needy children and reversing the policy of removing them from their own homes mounted. In 1911, Illinois passed the first mother's law--the Funds to Parents Act. The concept was warmly embraced. Two years later, twenty states had passed similar legislation. Sidel found that in 1933, the the Children's Bureau published a study showing that in 1931, 82 percent of those given aid were widows and that the overwhelming majority of recipients (96 percent) were White women. This pattern of providing mostly for White women arose largely through local agencies who had authority to subjectively determine "worthy and deserving" mothers from those who were not.

One of the most significant reforms was Aid to Dependent Children (ADC), which was established by the social Security Act of 1935. For fifteen years, ADC provided funds only for dependent children; in 1950, Congress added a caretaker to the reform for the purpose of providing

for the mother's essential expenses which changed the name to the present-day title of Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC). The cash provided varied from state to state; for example, in 1939, Arkansas provided \$8.10 per month for a family of two children, while Massachusetts provided \$61.07.

One of the most undesirable characteristics of the earlier AFDC programs was the continued denial of aid to unemployed men, often called "man-in-the-house" rule, which forced men out of the house so that women and children could receive aid. Traditionally, unemployment has been greater among Black men in this country; consequently, this welfare policy was designed in a way that tore apart Black families in a larger proportion than that of White families.

The Social Security Reform Bill of 1950 gave aid to families with dependent children, but denied aid to unemployed men and set the stage for women being the overwhelming majority of welfare recipients today. It should be noted that a national reform of 1961 permitted states to extend aid to families having an unemployed father in the home; however, only 26 states have elected to use this option.

Sidel (1986) presented some informing facts from her research regarding the AFDC program in its then current system:

- Four out of five AFDC families are headed by women.
- Approximately 45 percent of the children on AFDC are eligible because their parents are divorced or separated.
- One out of every four American children will depend on welfare at some point in their lives.
- Nationwide, more than 50 percent of women receiving welfare benefits first became mothers when they were teenagers.
- Since most AFDC recipients begin their families at a very young age, most are ready to make the transition off welfare long before they are 40 years of age.

Ackelsberg, Bartlett and Buchele (1988) assert that women are anxious to become self-sufficient, and they usually begin advancing off welfare when the youngest child is school age. Further, they found that most women depend on AFDC for not more than six years. Women in their studies reported that the amount received under the flat grant system, in which a family gets a fixed monthly payment according to its size and the region in the state where the family lives, was hardly enough to survive on. For example, Crockett (1981) found that in the State of Connecticut a family of three in Region "B", which is

an urban area of the state, received \$406.32. The grant is based on the following assumption:

AFDC Grant	\$296.00
Clothing Allowance	10.32
Food Stamps	<u>100.00</u>
TOTAL:	<u><u>\$406.32</u></u>

The harsh reality is that a family of three could not live decently on that income. Very little has changed since 1981. Today, a family of three in Region "B" gets an income maintenance grant of \$581.00 per month.

History and Mission of Community Colleges

Community colleges had its heritage deeply rooted in local high schools, a tax-supported secondary education. It took years before they could move out of the shadows of secondary education and establish its own identity. Monroe (1976) explained that while it was impossible to have one explicit definition that covers all community colleges, it could be said that the community college is the fulfillment of the American promise to its citizens for universal education. Monroe goes on to say that more than any other segment of the educational system from kindergarten to university, the community college has the freedom to experiment, to explore new paths of learning, to break with traditional methods of teaching, and to become a unique and innovative educational agency.

Before the major reforms of community colleges in the 1960s and 1970s, the mission was primarily to provide basic general education, vocational training, and meet agricultural needs. According to Baker and Roueche (1987), those reforms called for a new mission statement. Generally, community colleges have a commitment to providing high quality, comprehensive education, and extracurricular opportunities to meet the diverse needs of all its students. At the same time, it gives consideration for age, ethnic background, and preparation for college. In addition to providing an academic education, it also proposes to work in cooperation with business, labor, and state government by training their workers in job-related skills in basic education, and by preparing them for present and future technological and social change. An example of the typical goals that community colleges work to achieve are presented in The Washington Community College Program and Enrollment Plan (1988):

- A. To meet the increased demand for transfer.
 - In cooperation with four-year institutions, assure establishment of transfer course standards.
 - Facilitate curriculum articulation through greater cooperation among two-year and four-year colleges.

- Increase enrollment levels in academic transfer programs to accommodate the increasing number of students choosing to acquire a B.A. degree and choosing to start at a community college.
- Strengthen academic planning and advising services to prepare students for transfer to four-year institutions of their choice.

B. To respond to changing work force needs.

- Cooperate with state and federal agencies to provide for retraining of unemployed workers.
- Work closely with business leaders to provide programs to meet employer and student needs.
- Strengthen recruitment and improve retention by enhancing support services.
- Update institutional equipment and facilities to meet the standards of the four-year colleges and employers of community college graduates.

These goals were written in The Washington Plan for the years 1989 to 2000. The Connecticut Institutional Effectiveness Assessment Plan for Community Colleges, prepared in 1990, has similar goals to achieve.

Baker and Roueche (1987) conducted an in-depth study of Miami-Dade Community College, which opened in 1960 and graduated 100,000 students by 1985. It enjoys an enrollment of approximately 45,000 and is still growing. They chose Miami-Dade because they had systematically documented their processes for leadership, programs, and outcomes.

The Miami program offerings differ somewhat from many other community colleges because its community is different. It has daily new arrivals, as refugees and immigrants from Cuba, Haiti, and other parts of the world. They have the largest enrollment of foreign students of any college or university in the nation. Baker and Roueche (1987) found in their market analysis that the economic base of the community is not centered on manufacturing or industry, but rather on the processing of goods, money, information, and people. Armed with this information, their reform program included vocational and occupational skills tied directly to the needs of the community, i.e., criminal justice and firefighting, health care, banking and finance, funeral services, air conditioning, and dental hygiene. The college offers a wide variety of specialized programs in language training and employability skills for the refugees and immigrants. For example, a course designed for a review of English, and nursing theory and practice to assist foreign nurses to sit for the State Board Nursing Examination is offered. It also administers

a very large English as a Second Language (ESL) program. The college is not limited to vocational programs. It also offers an arts and science program for students who wish to transfer to other colleges and universities.

These are just some of the examples of the goals, programs, and reforms that are going on across the nation in community colleges to meet the changing needs of our communities.

The Newest Welfare Reform and Its Effect on Community Colleges

Ford (1990) reports that in the most recent social welfare reform, all Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) recipients whose youngest children are three years of age or older and who are not exempted for other reasons are mandated to participate in an education training program that is designed to prepare them for employment.

All previous welfare reform bills were aimed at income maintenance. For the first time since 1825, the year of the inception of social relief, the government has instituted an education reform which is the gateway for AFDC recipients to enter the work force with vocational certification rather than to enter with a low-paying dead-end job.

According to Jaschik (1988), this sweeping overhaul of the nation's welfare system will make eligible tens of thousands of AFDC recipients to enroll in job training programs at community colleges. Jaschik also warns that colleges are underprepared for their roles in meeting the needs of this new subculture and for their relationships with welfare agencies. This new reform will create less of a problem for four-year colleges and universities because the Family Support Bill of 1988, which mandates job-related training, provides for financial assistance for no more than three years of education. Many of the students will be counseled into community colleges because of the time frame for completing a vocational program.

Clearly, gaining admission to the open-door community college is not a barrier for AFDC women; however, Gold (1990) has observed that these women and other non-traditional students do have great concerns about how to manage themselves once at college because the culture of the institution, in most cases, has given little consideration to their needs. In connection with this position, Cross (1991), a renowned spokesperson for community college education, asserts that it was easy in the 1960s for community colleges to be in high agreement on a common purpose for providing comprehensive education for all its students, as well as for a national mission to open the door of higher education to previously unserved segments

of the population. Now, Cross questions whether any college can perform all functions to all students with excellence or even adequately in today's climate of scarce resources.

Similarly, Gold (1990) noted that the average age of community college students is 29. These students include welfare recipients, displaced homemakers, dislocated workers, and people whose skills are rendered obsolete by advanced technology. Gold also mentioned that almost all of these students need significant remediation to succeed at college. He also noted that these students often do not look, act, or learn like "traditional" college students, and, unfortunately, counselors and other professionals often respond to these adults with a "college isn't for everyone" mindset.

The changing college attendees from "traditional students" to more of the "non-traditional students" indicate implications for change in the mission and goals of community colleges. The universal principles on which community colleges were established in 1901 have remained constant, according to Monroe (1976). Among the principles are (1) universal opportunity for public education for all persons without distinction based on social class, family income, and ethnic, racial or religious backgrounds; (2) local control and support of free, non-tuition educational systems; and (3) a relevant curriculum designed to

meet both the needs of the individual and those of the community and of the nation. These three traditions are the foundation of the public community college. However, some community colleges (e.g., the community colleges of Connecticut) now require a small tuition fee of \$54.00 per credit, which means that the system has deviated slightly from the non-tuition concept. This is generally true of most other community colleges across the nation. However, this small fee is not affordable by most of the welfare women of this study and many other subcultures in our society.

New Issues Facing Community Colleges

In the earlier publications of Cross (1983) to some of her most recent publications (1990), she advocated that community colleges should reassess their mission statements, which in most cases propose an open-door admission for all would-be students with the goal of providing a high-quality, comprehensive education. Cross suggests that community colleges are finding out that it is nearly impossible to offer comprehensive excellence in liberal arts; transfer programs; vocational, remedial/basic skills, technical, general education; and credit-free programs. This is a major issue for these colleges to struggle with.

The internal critical question is, "Can they be all things to all students?"

There are other unsolved issues to be dealt with in their attempt to train and educate AFDC students. The racial crisis in American higher education will be a prominent feature of the 1990s as seen, for example by Jones and Nowotny (1990). "The trend line of racial incidents on campuses is rising. There will be many demographic realities and opportunities to contend with over the course of the 1990s. The size of the likely college-going population, both young and old, will be smaller; and the population will be composed mostly of persons who are less adequately prepared academically." Welfare recipients' general profiles in Connecticut, according to Ford (1990), are underprepared. They consist of approximately 31 percent Black and White in each category, and 38 percent Latinos with about 9 percent of the participants having very limited English communication skills.

The Massachusetts AFDC Profile, according to Ackelsberg, Bartlett and Buchele (1988), was comprised of 18.0 percent Black, 17.4 percent Hispanic, 63.6 percent White, and 1.0 percent Other. This profile is very closely aligned with Connecticut and many other states. Clearly, with thousands of these recipients becoming students, the diversity in community colleges will be greater than ever

before. While the demographic shifts may create racial tension for colleges to deal with, Jones and Nowotny (1990) do point out the following. One of the greatest opportunities of this decade will be consideration given by higher education to the welfare of what has historically been the "underserved" elements of low-income families and under-represented minorities.

A related issue to racial crisis in American higher education is that of faculty motivation for responsibility and accountability to teach the "Nation at Risk," as named by the National Commission on Excellence (1984). In addition to being urged to devise strategies and programs with outcome accountability to lessen the decline in student performance, teachers are asked to become culturally literate in order to be able to deal with the multicultural classroom of the 1990s.

The underserved elements of our society, who are in many cases community college students, are so needy that it is suggested that they are the primary cause for teacher "burnout" that is often caused by intense involvement with people over long periods of time. The painful realization for teachers is that their expectations are more unrealistic than the reality. AFDC students and other new subcultures have created for instructors the added task of keeping up with the changes of climate and culture (Kaikai & Kaikai, 1990).

A critical problem to which community colleges must address in dealing with the Welfare Reform Bill of 1988, which aims to make the masses of its undereducated population literate and skilled with a vocation within a three-year time frame, is the problem of handling the vast paper trail of forms that is required by welfare agencies. According to Jaschik (1988), the Federal Government policies mandate many progress reports and program completion updates. He emphasized the importance of higher education administrators, welfare agents, and legislators to begin some dialogue about the role of colleges in this reform. Finally, Jaschik said that the "big question" and "debate" is, "Who should pay the extra costs that colleges will incur for additional resources when they educate welfare recipients?"

Welfare students face many problems and must deal with some major issues that are impediments to success in their training and education at community colleges. To begin with, the Welfare Reform Bill of 1988 is the first major education reform since the origin of social welfare, which proposed that states provide financial support for up to three years of education. This created an opportunity for its recipients to obtain an associate's degree, offered at community colleges, rather than the usual short-term vocational training programs (Jaschik, 1988). A major problem for the student with the new welfare overhaul is

that prior to this bill, states usually discouraged AFDC recipients from going to college, and the new law still leaves it up to states to decide whether a recipient will pursue a degree or a short-term vocational program (Gold, 1990). It is possible for a student to attend a community college, but would be unable to select the program of his or her choice under this bill.

It is appropriate here to explain that most of the literature does not distinguish between male and female issues pertaining to welfare students. However, Aronson (1991) pointed out that more than 90 percent of the AFDC recipients in the Connecticut Job Connection Program were women. Accordingly, Ackelsberg, Bartlett and Buchele (1988) stated that in 1985, a study conducted in Massachusetts indicated that of nearly 85,000 AFDC cases, 93.6 percent were female-headed households. In 84 percent of the homes, the mother was the only parent. This seems to be the approximate national percentage trend. Therefore, more than 90 percent of the time the literature that speaks to problems and concerns for welfare students at community colleges are speaking of women's issues. Very few articles addressed issues that are specifically germane to women.

All of the aforementioned factors would affect any student in community colleges to some degree. The key question for this study is how have they affected the education of AFDC women students at community colleges.

Other Research Studies

Given the explosion of growth of community colleges since the 1960s, which is when women and other minority groups found that these colleges could be their route to enter the mainstream, it is surprising that more studies have not been done that look specifically at issues pertaining to women students. Very few studies surfaced in the literature review. Because the concept of the Welfare organization supporting its clients for education is such a new phenomena, there are no comprehensive studies regarding the outcome of their educational efforts at community colleges.

There is, however, a number of studies that are descriptive in content regarding the profile of women students and program offerings in general. Some such studies include: Returning Women Students in Community College (Schatzkammer, 1986), and Educating the Majority (Pearson, Shavlik, & Touchton, 1989).

While these studies are useful for examining women's issues in the broad arena of higher education, they do not provide information specific to the problems and concerns of AFDC women at community colleges. The Smith College study, "Women, Welfare, and Higher Education," dealt with issues for welfare women students who were enrolled at their own college, a four-year institution (Ackelsberg,

Bartlett, & Buchele, 1988). Most of the information presented (which was a compilation of papers from a conference) dealt with welfare policy issues; political implications of poverty in the United States; and a brief reflections paper from a former student, Susan Clark Berube, who talks about her exasperating experience with the Welfare and its policies regarding education. The study did not address any issues and concerns related to the community college women students.

This researcher found that there is still a need to know to what extent facilitating and hindering factors exist for Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) women who have enrolled in community colleges since the passing of the new Education Reform Bill of 1988.

C H A P T E R 3

STUDY DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the reason for choosing a phenomenological research method of investigation for this study. The setting and participants, the method of data collection, the process for interpretation and analysis of data, and the plan for presenting the results are also included.

Reason for Choosing a Phenomenological Study

After much methodical pondering of possible procedures to use for investigation of this problem, the researcher concluded that a quantitative instrument would not provide the kind of data that a qualitative reflective, semi-structured, open-ended interview would provide. The qualitative researcher prefers to rely on human subjects rather than on paper-and-pencil tests. The main rationale for using the human subject for data collection is that no nonhuman instrument is sufficiently flexible to adapt to the complexity of a real-life situation (Borg & Gall, 1989). Although the human observer is the primary data gatherer in qualitative research, many researchers collect

supplemental data for more objective evaluation, such as the use of interview guides and questionnaires. In the case of this study, an interview was used. A strictly quantitative method would not reveal realistic feelings that were experienced during real-life situations.

Schutz (1967), originating author of phenomenology as an appropriate research method for social science problems, argues that to use an objective interpretation of a social situation turns objective reality upside down. Simply spoken, the reality of inquiry is inverted. It is through another's stream of consciousness of a lived experience that social problems can be studied by using rigorous philosophical reflection, interpretation, and communication of one's own and others' experiences. Understanding the conscious acts of another person occurs when the interpreter puts himself or herself in the place of the other person and imagines that the researcher is selecting and using the spoken words. As the interviewee shares lived experiences, the interviewer can discover the subjective meaning. This is accomplished by the interviewer picturing the lived experiences being expressed from their stream of consciousness. Hence, it seemed appropriate to use a phenomenological study with in-depth interviewing to study this problem.

According to Borg and Gall (1989), phenomenology allows the researcher to develop the perspectives of the group

being studied, that is, the researcher must adopt the "insider's viewpoint". Adopting this viewpoint provided information regarding the realities of the situation, what they thought at the time, and how the interviewee felt during the experience of being an Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) student in a community college. Without the ability to undergo an experience for one's self, having another human being speak openly and truthfully about what they know and feel is as close to knowing the inner self of another as is possible. This is an added reason for having selected the phenomenological method with in-depth interviewing as an appropriate research instrument.

The primary theorist whose work has provided the theoretical structure for the methodology of this research is Alfred Schutz. In Phenomenology of the Social World (1967) and "Subjective and Objective Meaning" (1976), Schutz explains that it is not the purpose of the phenomenological interviewing to get all the answers to predetermined questions to test hypotheses, or to "evaluate" as the term is normally used. At the root of in-depth phenomenological interviewing is an interest in understanding the experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience, rather than being able to predict or control the experience through the use of an objective instrument.

Sample Population

Selection Process for Participants

Customarily, education researchers rely on published lists, called "sampling frames," of various populations to select groups to study a research problem. A sample group could be selected from accessible populations by contacting the State or District Education Office to obtain an up-to-date list (Borg & Gall, 1989). Because of the sensitive nature of being a welfare recipient and the protection of the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act of 1974, the principal variables which would identify women with AFDC status could not be made available through college records.

Random sampling of broad populations is possible for survey research in which slight demands are made on the subjects; for example, public opinion polls, which require only a few minutes of a respondent's time. Demands on the subject are much greater in most educational research. As a result of this condition, it would have been virtually impossible to obtain the cooperation of all subjects selected by random sampling (Borg & Gall, 1989). Cluster sampling is sometimes used in educational research when it is either impractical or impossible to obtain a list of all members of the accessible population. Cluster sampling was not used with the AFDC women for this study because

there was no one place or time when they were clustered together. This research was limited to the use of volunteers for a sample group. Before the interviews could begin, the subjects had to first give written consent to participate in the study (see Appendix A).

Criteria for Participation in the Study

This study was limited to women who were receiving welfare and were attending a community college in Connecticut under the benefits of the Welfare Education Reform Act of 1988. Participants had to be matriculated in an associate degree or vocational certificate program.

Because of the volunteer factor of the group being studied, there could not be a forecast for different characteristics among the subjects. The researcher, however, gave attention to variables, such as age and ethnicity, in order to have a more balanced group for the study.

In many educational research projects, small samples are more appropriate than large samples. This is often true of studies in which role playing, in-depth interviews, and other such time-consuming measurement techniques are employed. A study that probes deeply into the characteristics of a small sample often provides more knowledge than a study that attacks the sample problem by

collecting only shallow information on a large scale (Borg & Gall, 1989).

People in general are hesitant about openly admitting that they are recipients of social welfare; this posed some difficulty with getting an ethnically mixed group of participants between the ages of 20 and 45. Ultimately, the number of 14 interviewees was selected because the researcher thought it possible to obtain approximately one-half of the members of the "Students Action for Mothers in School" (SAMS) Club to volunteer for the study. Borg and Gall (1989) warn that it is nearly impossible to get a high percentage of volunteers to participate in a study that has high demands on their time unless you are able to incorporate your treatment or interviews into a regular school program, and thus avoid the requirement of obtaining informed consent. When possible, Borg and Gall (1989) suggest that potential volunteers should be offered not only pay for participation but small courtesy gifts simply for taking the time to consider whether they would want to participate. This researcher offered \$10.00 to each woman who participated in the study.

Among the 12 community colleges in Connecticut, four colleges were selected to recruit volunteers to participate in the study, namely, Greater Hartford Community College, Manchester Community College, Mattatuck Community College, and Quinebaug Community College. All of the community

colleges in Connecticut are similar in their program offerings and administrative structure. They each offer a range of associate degree and certificate programs. Some of the newest reforms have included enriching the General Studies and Liberal Arts transfer programs. Some of the associate degree programs that are offered include: accounting, business administration, data processing, disabilities specialist, education associate, graphic design, industrial science, media associate, office administrative careers, and medical laboratory technician. A few of the certificate programs include: culinary arts, desktop publishing, education certificate, gerontology, law enforcement, and personal financial planning.

Support services that are a part of most of the colleges consist of counseling, tutoring, child care, clubs, intercollegiate athletics, and adults in transition programs. Regardless of the size of the college, it will have a full complement of administrators and managers to run the college. The colleges range in enrollment from approximately 2,000 to 8,000 students. Each college has a president, four or more deans, several associate or assistant deans, and a program director for all major programs, such as registration and financial aid.

Recruiting participants for this study started at Manchester Community College and Mattatuck Community College, because AFDC students at these two institutions

had formally organized a college-accepted club--Students Action for Mothers in School (SAMS). Because of the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act of 1974, the use of college records to identify Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) students as possible participants could not be made available. Consequently, the SAMS Club served as an excellent source for identifying participants for this study. However, in order to get a balanced group of participants, women students from two other colleges (Greater Hartford Community College and Quinebaug Community College) were recruited to volunteer to participate in the study.

Seidman, Sullivan, and Schatzkammer (1983) found that locating participants for interviews was most successfully accomplished through informal channels and, whenever possible, through peers rather than supervisors. Because of uncertainties about motives of teacher referrals, students might think that their success in their course work is connected to consent for the interview. This could affect the interview material. Following the Seidman, Sullivan, and Schatzkammer (1983) guide, referrals were obtained primarily from the SAMS Club members and advisors for the Club. Other referrals were made by the Directors of Learning Centers, where some of the AFDC students either worked or took part in the activities that were offered through the Centers. Sign-up sheets were used

(see Appendix B) for students to register if they chose to participate in this research study.

Selecting the Participant Group

The researcher selected 14 participants from among 21 volunteers. Following is an explanation for eliminating seven of the students who signed up to be a part of this study:

- One man was eliminated because the study did not include men.
- One White woman was eliminated because she misunderstood the announcement; she was not an AFDC recipient.
- One White woman was selected but later eliminated after missing two appointments.
- One young Hispanic woman was eliminated in favor of selecting a more mature woman for the study, since age was a consideration in forming the group.
- One African-American woman was eliminated due to the desire to create a balanced group of women.
- Two White women were eliminated due to the desire to create a more balanced group of women.

Ethnically, the women participants in this study consisted of:

- Five African-Americans
- Five White Americans
- Two Hispanics
- One West Indian
- One Asian

Table 1 presents participant profile characteristics. For purposes of confidentiality, participant numbers are used instead of names or initials.

Method of Data Collection

The science of human behavior is context dependent (Gergen, 1973). A true phenomenological analysis can only be achieved by actively participating in the context of the participants' lived experience. The in-depth phenomenological interviewing tool, which was used, offered an opportunity to inquire about multiple truths and meanings which Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) women students make of their lives during their educational experience at a community college.

The question may be raised as to whether the information gained from this study would be the same information gained from another group of AFDC participants at another place and time. It is not the point of this study to

Table 1

Participant Profile Characteristics

Participant Number	Age	Number of Children	Age of Youngest Child	Highest Education Before Starting Community College	Degree Program Major	Certificate Program Major
0010	22	1	3	15	X	
0011	22	2	1.7	13	X	
0012	27	2	2	14	X	
0013	29	2	9	12	X	
0014	22	1	4	12		X
0015	21	1	3	12	X	
0016	26	2	3	12	X	
0017	27	1	5	13	X	
0018	30	4	2	11+GED		X
0019	31	5	5	13	X	
0020	42	2	12	12		X
0021	20	1	4	13	X	
0022	26	2	3	12	X	
0023	39	3	8	11.5+GED	X	

prove or disprove a hypothesis, rather it is to gain insight and understanding into the lives of these participants. However, this methodology does suggest that the meanings, the issues, the factors, and the understandings abstracted from these interviews may be quite similar and representative of other populations of AFDC women students at other community colleges.

This research method creates a social interaction between the researcher and the participant; therefore, special caution was taken to guard against biases and subjective opinions that the researcher might have. At the same time, it was very important to establish a rapport and a trusting relationship with each interviewee. Hence, clear lines were drawn between social interaction and objective interviewing.

The phenomenological in-depth interview method is usually conducted by using either unstructured or semi-structured questions. Borg and Gall (1989) caution that completely unstructured questions, which allow for absolute freedom of reply, can yield in-depth responses but often produce data that are difficult to analyze or explain. The semi-structured approach, which was used in this study, uses an interview guide which indicates the questions to be asked of the interviewee and the order in which they were asked (see Appendix D).

In this semi-structured approach, the structured questions were asked first, and, if necessary, each one was followed by a probe in the nature of clarifying unstructured, open-ended questions. This allowed for in-depth responses in each category. The subsequent unstructured questions in the form of probing facilitated an understanding of the responses from the structured questions. A probe is clarification, or another run at the same question, or a way of helping the respondent to see the question another way. In one sense of the word, all questions "probe" (Gottlieb, 1986). Gottlieb (1986) described probing as follow-up to an original question. The ability to probe well is perhaps the one skill that discriminates between the best interviewers and those who are merely adequate (Downs, Smeyak, & Martin, 1980). All questions were broad in scope and were designed to direct the respondent to focus on the total experience and tell the story as she lived it (Schutz, 1967). It is through another's stream of consciousness of a lived experience that social problems can be studied. This is done through rigorous philosophical reflection, interpretation, and communication of one's own and others' experiences. Providing some structure for the interviewing process has formed a base for analyzing, understanding, and explaining the results of this study.

Questions on the "Interview Guide" addressed the following broad subject areas (see Appendix D):

- Factors that influenced the AFDC recipient's decision to enroll at a community college instead of another type of training school.
- Facilitating and hindering factors that the study participant experienced with the Welfare and community college organizations during one's college registration process.
- Experience of being an AFDC student at the community college.
- Experience with the policies and procedures of the Welfare organization as a recipient of their education plan.
- Ways in which the study participant's family facilitated or hindered the process of one's going to college.
- The most important facilitating or hindering factors that were experienced with the Welfare, the college, and the family.
- Reflection on the process that gave meaning to the study participant's life.
- How the experience made the study participant feel.

- Recommendations to facilitate positive change.

At the beginning of the first of two separate meetings or the first part of two combined meetings, the researcher established a rapport and a trusting relationship by reviewing the purpose of the study, and how the study would assist the college and the Welfare organization in providing an educational opportunity for AFDC women. The participant filled out the Consent Form (see Appendix A) and the Participant Information Form (see Appendix C), and the researcher briefly discussed the reason for taping the interviews. The researcher then informed each participant that she would receive a \$10.00 gift for taking part in the study.

Whenever a research project extends over a considerable period of time and makes considerable demands, there is likely to be high attrition of subjects, thus reducing the sample size. Therefore, it is important to take steps to keep attrition to a minimum (Borg & Gall, 1989). In this context, the researcher scheduled two interview sessions with the subjects. When it was possible, two separate interviews were conducted. When it was not possible for the interviewee to meet on two separate days, a double interview session was conducted. The first session was designed to get acquainted and establish trust. Activities included the format of the interviews,

that the meaning of this method of research is for "meaning-making" of a lived experience. The participant was told that the researcher's role would be to ask the questions and to listen as the participant spoke openly about past and present experiences in her educational process, but would comment, if necessary, to move the interview along or to ask probing or clarifying questions. The second interview included enough time to cover all questions from the Interview Guide (see Appendix D).

A tape recorder was used to record the interviews with the study participants. The interviews took place between November, 1992, and February, 1993.

The interviews were held at a location that was mutually agreeable to both the participants and the researcher. When possible, a quiet, private, or semi-private space in the library of the college where the student was attending classes was used. If the participants preferred to meet at another location (e.g., the Women's Center, her home, or another conducive place), the researcher remained flexible and sensitive regarding the participant's time constraints and other family responsibilities. Specifically, three interviewees chose their home; two chose an office at a Learning Center where they worked; one chose the SAMS Club office; two chose the researcher's office; and six chose the college library on their respective campus.

Interpretation and Data Analysis

Each completed interview audiotape was transcribed by a secretary under the researcher's supervision. A computer software package, "Microsoft Word", was used to search for information relating to a given theme. With basic knowledge, the computer could be programmed to call up "theme" information by a single word or multiple words in the entire text. After the computer sorted the theme(s) by category, it printed only the text containing the requested theme, thereby producing all notes in a single category. A completed hard copy was produced when needed.

The researcher perused the transcripts to identify all themes for quick reference at the point of consolidating them into consistent major themes for interpretation and analysis. Some of the themes are presented in the composite profiles of the participants. A profile, as developed by Seidman, Sullivan, and Schatzkammer (1983), is composed from the transcript of an interview series. The words of the interviewer are omitted so that the participant's story stands alone.

Modifications were made in the stories only for purposes of clarity and ease in reading. However, the original meaning has been maintained. The process of profile making is one that involved construction and

composition. The materials selected to build the final story in the form of participants' composite profiles are presented from the voice of the participants. The final content for profile making has met the criteria suggested by Seidman (1985). The material has preserved the dignity of the participants and has reflected an accurate account of the interviews as a whole.

The information gained is intended to create a better understanding of what Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) women students perceive as being facilitating or hindering factors as they pursue their education at a community college, which has been made possible by the Welfare organization. Also, it will add to the much-needed literature for policy reform or changes for the Welfare and community college organizations in meeting the educational needs of these students.

Presentation of Results

The results of this research study are presented and discussed in Chapter 4. It will include composite profiles; themes of facilitating and hindering factors pertaining to completing the associate degree or the certificate program; recommendations for welfare education reform; and suggestions for policy changes in community colleges to meet the needs of AFDC students. A summary

of the research, conclusions, and recommendations for further research will be presented in Chapter 5.

The results of this study will explain the realities of day-to-day life for Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) women recipients who become students at a community college.

C H A P T E R 4

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Introduction

One of the purposes of this chapter is to present the results of this study in a thorough, yet concise manner. Over the course of the study, the researcher dealt with large amounts of data received from Participant Information Forms and from participant interviews. The task of sorting through the data and organizing the responses so that they could be best understood was complex.

The data have been organized in this chapter as concisely as possible without eliminating valuable information. Several tables and figures have been provided to aid the reader in highlighting pertinent information pertaining to the composite profiles. The Participant Information Forms and the interviews from fourteen welfare women students at four different community colleges in Connecticut were combined to construct three composite profiles by age group categories. This process was used to provide a more comprehensive view of the lives of the participants.

Only the data from the interviews were used to present the "themes" of helping and hindering factors from the Welfare System and from the community colleges as pertaining to completing an associate's degree or certification

program. The format for presenting the major themes includes a statement of the researcher's interpretation of all the data pertaining to each theme, followed by quotations of the participants' own words to validate the researcher's interpretation.

One of the most thought-provoking questions on the Interview Guide was, "What do you (the participant) think this experience means in your life?" This section is presented verbatim from each participant's interview transcript under their participant identification numbers listed in Table 1. Since the research data are drawn from the participant's lived experience, it was appropriate to ask the question, "What policy and procedural changes would you recommend to either the welfare system or the community college organization?" To present this data, a brief statement of the researcher's interpretation of the recommendation is offered; and it is followed by a quotation from the participant's interview that aims to validate the recommendation.

Composite Profiles Overview

The composite profiles are constructed to be representative of three age categories with common characteristics, needs, and concerns. After a careful review of the transcriptions, and the Participant Information Forms

it became evident that certain age ranges had more similar than dissimilar characteristics; therefore, it seemed logical to construct three composite profiles for the women in these age group categories:

- (1) Composite Profile Group One: Age 20 to 25
- (2) Composite Profile Group Two: Age 26 to 30
- (3) Composite Profile Group Three: Age 31 to 45

In each of the composite profiles, the age of the youngest child is of particular importance because the newest welfare reform, The Family Support Act of 1988, mandates that all recipients whose youngest children are age three, and are not exempted for other reasons, must participate in vocational training or a basic skills program that proposes to prepare the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) recipients for work.

Composite Profile Group One:
Age 20 to 25

The age category for this composite profile was set for 20 to 25 years of age; however, all five of the women were in their early 20s. Specifically, the ages and other characteristics of the women are presented in Table 2.

In analyzing the data for education attainment before matriculating at a community college, the education level of these welfare recipients were found to be above the norm in Connecticut (see Table 2). According to research

Table 2

Composite Profile No. 1:
Age Group 20 to 25

Participant Number	Age	Years of Education Before Community College	Marital Status	Number of Children	Youngest Child
0010	22	15	Divorced	1	3
0011	22	13	Single	2	1.7
0014	22	12	Single	1	4
0015	21	12	Single	1	3
0021	20	13	Single	1	4

conducted for this study and noted in Chapter 1, Aronson's (1991) study of the Job Connection Training Program in Connecticut, an agency that works with Welfare to coordinate training for its clients, found that approximately 60 percent of the welfare population had not earned a high school diploma and nearly 20 percent had not completed eighth grade.

As can be noted from Table 2, 100 percent of these women had achieved a high school diploma; 60 percent had some education beyond the high school level before enrolling at a community college.

It is appropriate to restate some research from Borg and Gall (1989) to help explain this phenomenon:

The degree to which characteristics of volunteer samples affect research results depends on the specific nature of the investigation. For example, a study of the level of intelligence of successful workers in different occupations would probably yield spuriously high results if volunteer subjects were studied, since volunteers tend to be more intelligent than non-volunteers.

. . . It is apparent that the use of volunteers in research complicates the interpretation of research results and their generalizability to the target population, which includes many individuals who would not volunteer. (p. 229)

It could be that the women who volunteered to participate in this study do not closely represent the majority of AFDC women today, in the area of education attainment before matriculating at a community college.

The women in this study seemed anxious to complete their vocational program, to further their education, and

to become independent of the welfare through employment. Following are comments from participants' own words:

"Well, I was planning, first of all, to go to a four-year college. Then I got pregnant just after I graduated from high school. So, I knew that I had to take a detour. I knew it had to be a community college so that I could commute back and forth. After I had my child, I knew I had to go on welfare, and I knew I couldn't afford to go to a state university. So, I chose to come here to begin my courses of study, but my dream is still to go to a four-year college. . . . I know that I have to be here. And I have to go on because I have my child and myself to think about. I know that the state can never provide me with the income that I need to live the way that I want to live."

"I know that I am getting something out of my college education--a degree; and I will find a better job. I was living with a relative, and she had been in college for four years as a Chemistry major. I saw her making all that money before she got out of college. She had lots of job opportunities. I was encouraged because I know there are a lot of things that I can do."

"Well, I was in college before. I always wanted to be a teacher. I told my case worker that I wanted to go back to college to be a teacher. She said, 'You have all this experience, why don't you get a job?' I told her about my sincere desire to become a teacher. She still

sent me to the Department of Labor for two weeks to brush up on my interviewing skills. A week after I completed the training, I got a job. I still told my worker that I wanted to go back to school. Well, I knew about the Community College, so I started there. My worker said it was okay, but I had to pick a vocational major that would prepare me for a job right after I graduated in two years. I picked Medical Lab Tech because the Education associate's degree would only prepare me to become a paraprofessional. I don't want to be a paraprofessional. I want to be a teacher. I said, okay, since I couldn't get what I wanted, I would settle for something in the medical field. It has good benefits, and it pays well. I would always have a job. . . . I found that I didn't like to work with sick people, so I changed my major to General Studies. The welfare Job Connection worker dropped me from the program because General Studies does not prepare you for a job after graduation. . . . It prepares you to transfer. I feel more satisfied because I have more credits to transfer towards my goal, and that's to become a teacher."

"When I got out of high school, I wanted to go to college to be a social worker. I did not want a certificate program. The Welfare informed me that they could not help me to get a four-year degree, only a certificate program. . . . My worker told me that I could not register in a transfer program, only a certificate program. After

much persistence, the Job Connection worker told me that I could take courses that would count towards a degree in social work, but I had to be registered in a vocational program. They also told me that I would be cut off from any assistance for college after two years. I will take my chances in finding a way to continue my schooling after two years."

"Being on AFDC, the state allows a limited time of two years to get your degree. The only answer to that is a community college. . . . I volunteered for the program to begin college when my daughter was two years old because I wanted to get it done before she started school. I just didn't want her in school with a welfare mother. I really didn't!"

The data from the Participant Information Form (see Appendix C) pointed out that all of the women in Group One were single parents. Additionally, 80 percent of those women were young and had never been married. Twenty percent had been married and subsequently divorced. Sixty percent of the youngest children were ages three years or below, and the remaining 40 percent were ages four or above.

To conclude, clearly the women in Profile Group One were highly motivated in preparing themselves for a future outside the welfare system. Eighty percent expressed strong, sincere desires to continue their education at a

college that offered a baccalaureate degree after they completed their vocational training program.

Composite Profile Group Two:
Age 26 to 30

The age group for this composite profile is 26 to 30. Specifically, the ages and other characteristics of this profile are presented in Table 3.

The data from the Participant Information Form (see Appendix C) revealed that the family status of the women in Profile Group Two were all single-parent households. Thirty-three percent were single as a result of divorce; 33 percent were single due to a marital separation; and the remaining 33 percent had never been married. Sixty-seven percent of the youngest children were ages three or below, and 33 percent were ages four or above.

Up until 1961, AFDC programs denied aid to unemployed men, often called the "man-in-house" rule. It forced many men out of the house so that women and children could receive aid. The National Federal Reform Act of 1961 permitted states to extend aid to families having an unemployed father in the home; however, only 26 states have elected to use this option. The researcher received mixed communication regarding whether Connecticut has opted to use the 1961 Reform Act. However, it was clear that women in Connecticut who found themselves in the situation of having an unemployed husband in the home had difficulty in

Table 3

Composite Profile No. 2:
Age Group 26 to 30

Participant Number	Age	Years of Education Before Community College	Marital Status	Number of Children	Youngest Child
0012	27	14	Divorced	2	2
0013	29	12	Divorced	2	9
0016	26	12	Single	2	3
0017	27	13	Single	1	5
0018	30	11+GED	Separated	4	2
0022	26	12	Separated	2	3

getting income maintenance. For example, one woman in Profile Group One had to insist upon her unemployed husband leaving the home because he was preventing her from getting aid for the family. Also, it prevented her from being eligible to receive child care under the newest welfare education reform which provides child care for AFDC students.

The data revealed that the education level of the women in this age group was far above the norm for AFDC recipients in Connecticut. Like the women in composite Profile Group One, whose previous education was far above the norm in Connecticut, a notable 83 percent had completed high school, and only 17 percent received a GED before entering college. Thirty-three percent of the women in Profile Group Two advanced beyond the high school level to gain at least some college experience (see Table 3).

Again, as stated above, Borg and Gall (1989) found that the degree to which characteristics of volunteer samples affect research results depends on the specific nature of the investigation, since volunteers tend to be more intelligent than non-volunteers of the target population which they represent.

The women in Profile Group Two also seemed anxious to complete their vocational programs, further their education, and become independent of the welfare system through employment. Following are participants' own words:

"I wanted to be a socialist, but I had to register for disabilities specialist--something that would prepare me to get a job after I graduated. It has been a struggle. I studied. I struggled. I screamed. I cried. I yelled. I--Oh Lord--I did everything I possibly could to try to finish college. I had to take some time off to think things through, but now everything is coming together and starting to fall into place. I am excited about the challenge that waits for me. My Mother, my Mother was so mad! She's so angry because she doesn't want me to go to school. She wants me to get a job because she wants me to be able to help out, to make a contribution, because it's tough right now. And I'm saying, 'Mommy, you know I love you very much, but college is something that will help us both in the long run. When you go to college, it opens up many horizons and doors for you.'"

"My kids are very young. My youngest is two years old. So, as far as they're concerned (the Welfare), I don't have to do anything 'til my kids are full-time in school. I volunteered to start my schooling. My worker was impressed that I volunteered for the program. I had gone to two business schools before. I think they are just a waste of time. They're not very impressive on a resume. . . . I came to this college, even though I could have gone to Hartford College for Women if I had wanted to. The reason I came here is because it was the only college

that had the certificate program for Legal Assistance. I want to work in the legal system when I am finished here. I can't wait to finish so I can get off the system."

"I had already gone to a computer processing institute. The state would prefer that you go to one of those schools to your going to college, but it is a waste of your time because getting a job was a big joke. So, I felt I needed--I wanted--an education. I wanted something that would train me so I'd be able to get a job when I finished, plus having the satisfaction of having a degree that meant something. I don't want to end up back on welfare."

"I had a lousy job. I was a packer in a warehouse. I turned around one day and said, 'I'm not doing this for the rest of my life.' I came to the Community College. It is just comfortable for me to go to. I am getting a good education. It has had more impact than a technical college would have had. Getting an associate's degree would look better than just getting a quick certificate from one of those quick, fast training schools. . . . I am amazed that I actually made it through the process. It's like I can sit back and take a deep breath and say, 'I did it!' I went through the struggle, all the red tape and the rest. I feel almost like a sigh of relief that I've actually made it through. This is my fifth semester, so it's two-and-one-half years. Now I feel that I can go out, apply for a job, and they can't tell me, 'You're not qualified.'"

I know I am qualified. I have the experience on paper. I have the education. That is something that I did not have before."

"I didn't want to go to a Business School or a school that could not prepare me to work with people. . . . I wouldn't be doing the type of work I want to do in the future, which is working with disabled people in helping them to get the benefits that are out there for them. I am more interested in helping somebody that needs help rather than getting into the business world. . . . I am already helping students by tutoring them in math. I have a 4.0 grade point average in math, even though I did poorly in math in high school. I am registered here in the Disabilities Specialist degree program. The degree ends here. It prepares you to go out into the field to get a job, but I can go on to the University of Connecticut for a bachelor's degree in Rehabilitative Services."

"I went to work right after high school for an insurance company. My work was not challenging. My brain was like--dead. . . . I wanted something to, like tickle my mind. I wanted to go to school, but I knew that I couldn't be a good mother, go to work, and go to school. I couldn't be that stressed out. . . . I told my mother, 'I am gonna go to school full-time.' And, you know, my mother agreed that I could come and live with her so I could go to school."

I told the lady, my Job Connection worker, that I wanted to be a social worker. . . . She said okay. See, my case worker is the person who gives me my State check. You don't deal with them for school. You work with the Job Connection people. I registered for the Social Services Program at the college. After the first semester, I talked with a counselor and found out that some of my classes wouldn't transfer. As a matter of fact, a lot of my classes didn't fall into the transfer category. I didn't want to take 60 credits and then only have 30 to transfer. My whole point for coming here was to try to get into a four-year college.

After the first semester, I changed my major to Liberal Arts. After I was all registered, my Job Connection worker told me that they would not be able to pay for my day care if I stayed in that program. I said, 'Why?' She said that 'Liberal Arts is not covered under the Welfare Education Program. You have to be in a program that makes you employable.' I said, 'What do you mean? If anything, Liberal Arts gives you more than just one skill--like accounting.' She said that I had to change my major in order to qualify for the Welfare Education Assistance Program and that I must be in a vocational program. I told her that I had too many credits to change. If I did change, I could not finish in two years. She said, 'You know, if I were you, I probably wouldn't change mine either.'

. . . I didn't tell you at first because my old boss was more lenient. I have a new boss. . . . Well, that's the problem. She will not approve the cost of your day care if you stay in Liberal Arts.'

I must go on to college. An associate's degree is not going to get me a job that pays me enough money to take care of my two kids and me. After going through all that rigamarole, they dropped me from the program. I am still in the Liberal Arts program with the intent of transferring to a four-year college to get my bachelor's degree."

To conclude, all the women in Profile Group Two were motivated to complete their training and to continue their education at a baccalaureate college, or to become gainfully employed. Fifty percent of the participants expressed a desire to earn a bachelor's degree subsequent to completing their vocational training at the community college. Quite notably, the data indicated that they were all working toward becoming independent of the welfare system.

Composite Profile Group Three:
Age 31 to 45

The composite profile age group is 31 to 45. Only three of the fourteen women who volunteered to participate in the study were in this age category. Specifically, the ages and other characteristics of these women are presented in Table 4.

Table 4

Composite Profile No. 3:
Age Group 31 to 45

Participant Number	Age	Years of Education Before Community College	Marital Status	Number of Children	Youngest Child
0019	31	13	Separated	5	5
0020	42	12	Separated	2	12
0023	39	11.5+GED	Divorced	3	8

In Profile Group One, the majority of the women indicated that their marital status was single. In Profile Group Two, the majority of the women indicated that they had been married, but were either separated or divorced. In Profile Group Three, all of the women had been married, but were either separated or divorced. One hundred percent of the youngest children were age five or above.

Again, the educational level before they entered a community college was higher than what was found to be the case in an earlier study for AFDC recipients in Connecticut, which found that more than 50 percent of the participants had not finished high school. Sixty-six percent of the participants in the Profile Age Group 31 to 45 had completed high school. The remaining third had completed eleventh grade and obtained a GED before enrolling at a community college. Additionally, within this total group, 33 percent of the women gained college experience.

The data indicated that the goals for women in composite Profile Group Three, Age 31 to 45, were mixed. Sixty-six percent wanted to complete their vocational training as a terminal degree, and subsequently to enter the work force. The remaining third were looking forward to transferring to a baccalaureate college. Following are the participants' of this age group (31 to 45) own words:

"I told my worker that I wanted to go back to college. I wanted to train for a job that would pay me enough to take care of my five children. He told me that I might do better by going to a secretarial school. I told him no, because a secretarial job would not pay me enough to take care of five kids. . . . I might as well stay home and take care of my children. When he saw that I was serious about college, he started to help me to get in. After I was in school for two semesters, I became ill. I had to go into the hospital. Afterwards, the State sent me some papers to sign saying that I was disabled. I would not sign them. In fact, if I had asked for disability status, I would not have been able to get it. I told them that I wanted to go back to school. The Lord had given me this opportunity. So now I am going to finish."

"At first, I was a little intimidated by the thought of being back in school. . . . But my advisor at the college encouraged me a lot. . . . Now, I was thinking of taking a double major, but the counselor talked me into going for my bachelor's degree. But, I don't think the State will help me with that. I understand that they only want you to go for two years, but they will stretch it to three if necessary. If I go on for my bachelor's, I am on my own. . . . I want to get a good job. Ever since my kids were little, I would work a while, then find myself in a desperate hole, needing help, then I would have to go back

on welfare. On again, off again, I felt like I was on the roller coaster. . . . You see, my problem was with health. At one time, I had a pretty good job making \$6.50 per hour, back in 1979. Well, that was pretty good money back then, but my benefits only covered me. I worked 50 hours per week. It was hard. I was willing to do it, but I could not pay my daughter's medical bill. I hope to put all this behind me."

"My Job Connection worker sent me to the college to take English as a second language (ESL). From there, they recommended that I enroll in the college. I told my worker that I wanted to go to college. She said I would have to pay my own way or get financial aid. Job Connection would pay for child care, but I didn't need child care. My youngest is in school all day. They did give me a bus pass. I used that every day to get to the college.

It has been hard. I started with the English classes that have no credit. I finished those, and now I am taking four courses.

The Welfare told me that if I wanted to go to college, I had to finish in two years, by 1994. I don't know why they told me that. They only pay for my bus pass. Financial Aid pays for my tuition and books. . . . I don't think I can be finished by May, 1994. My English is not good.

I am afraid that I will not get a job when I finish. I will be 45 years old. Who will hire me, especially since my English is no good? They should spend more time and money educating the young girls who have a chance to get a job. When my girl is 18, they will take her off my State check. If she can't get a job, she, like the other girls, will have to go to the City Welfare for help. The City doesn't pay enough for them to live on their own, and they don't have good health benefits, and they won't help them to go to college. Many of the girls will go and get pregnant so they can go on the State; that way they can get help to go to college. . . . My girl will have to go on the City. I know she can't get a job with only a high school diploma. When the City won't help them to go to college, this encourages them to get pregnant so they can go on the State.

My girl could get financial aid for college, but the City would cut her off. . . . I can't afford to take care of her when she is 18 years. They should help her. . . . I don't know what is ahead. Who will hire me at 45 years? It is not easy to find a job at my age. Everybody wants someone with experience."

To conclude the last of the composite profiles, the data indicated that the 31 to 45 age group expressed more concern for the future of their older children. There was also some concern for employment at middle-age. They were

all working toward completing their vocational program with the hope that it would lead to becoming independent of the welfare system.

Characteristics of Participant Profiles

Profile data combined from Tables 2, 3, and 4 are presented in the following figures to aid the reader in quickly gaining pertinent information about the participants as a group. The characteristics illustrated include the age of the youngest child/children (Figure 1), the total number of children in the family (Figure 2), the educational grade level of the women before matriculating at a community college (Figure 3), and the percentage of participants in each age category (Figure 4).

Themes

This part of Chapter 4 represents an analysis and explanation of major "themes" from 14 audiotaped and transcribed in-depth, semi-structured interviews with AFDC women students at four community colleges in Connecticut.

The format for presenting the themes includes a statement of interpretation of data as understood by the researcher. The statement is followed by excerpts from the participants' verbatim quotes, taken from their interview in order to validate the researcher's analysis and interpretation. The themes are presented in categories of

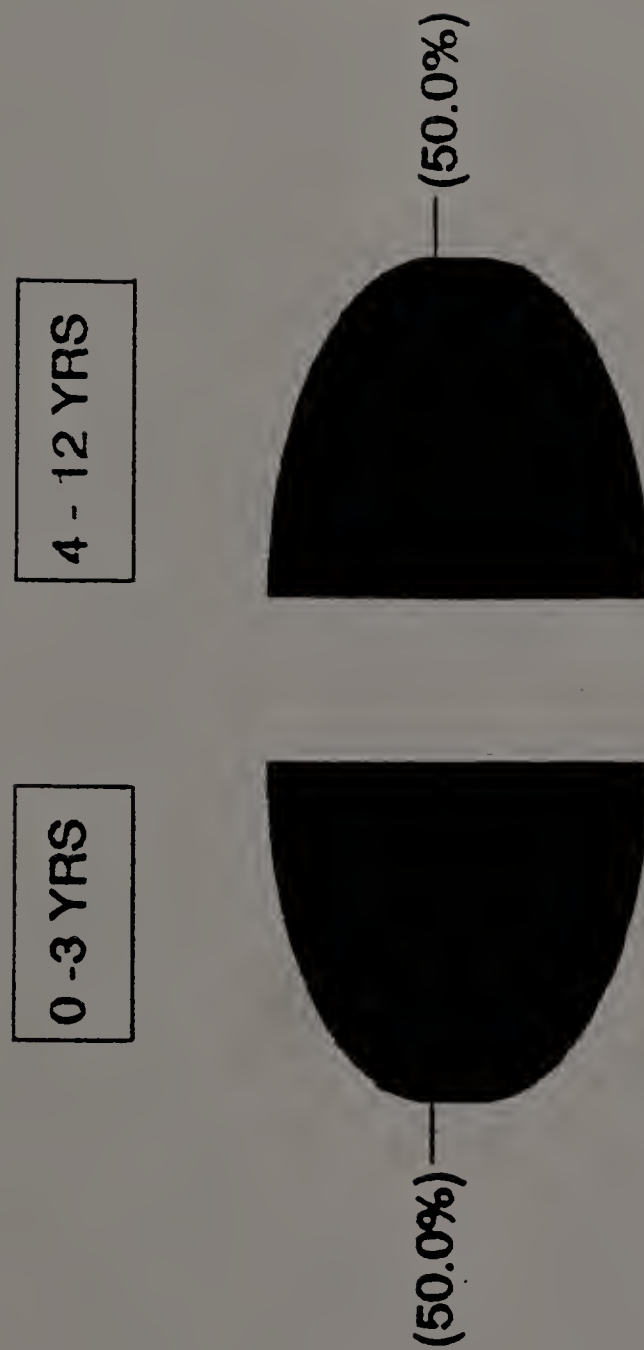


Figure 1. Age of the youngest child/children.

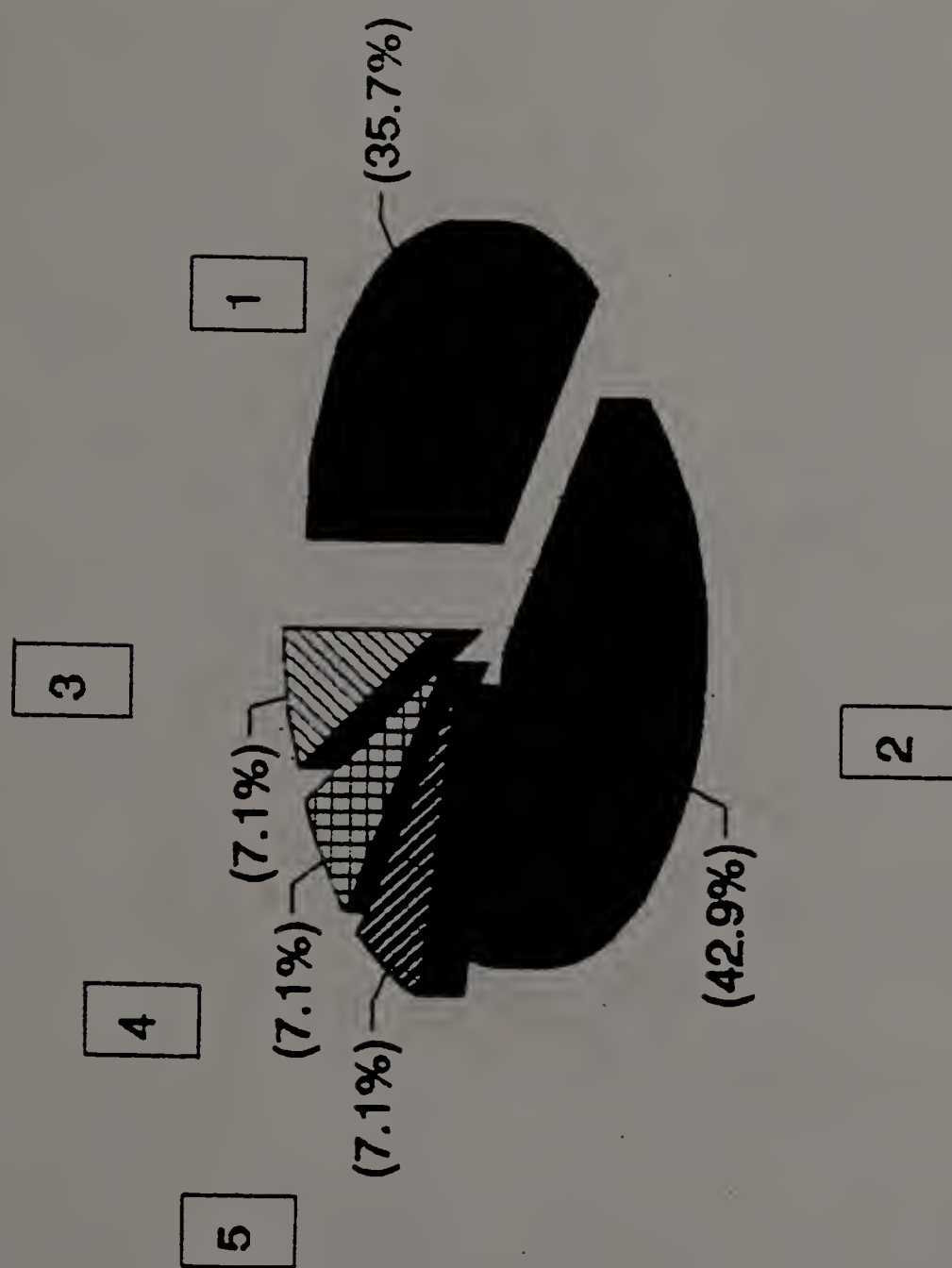


Figure 2. Number of children in the family.

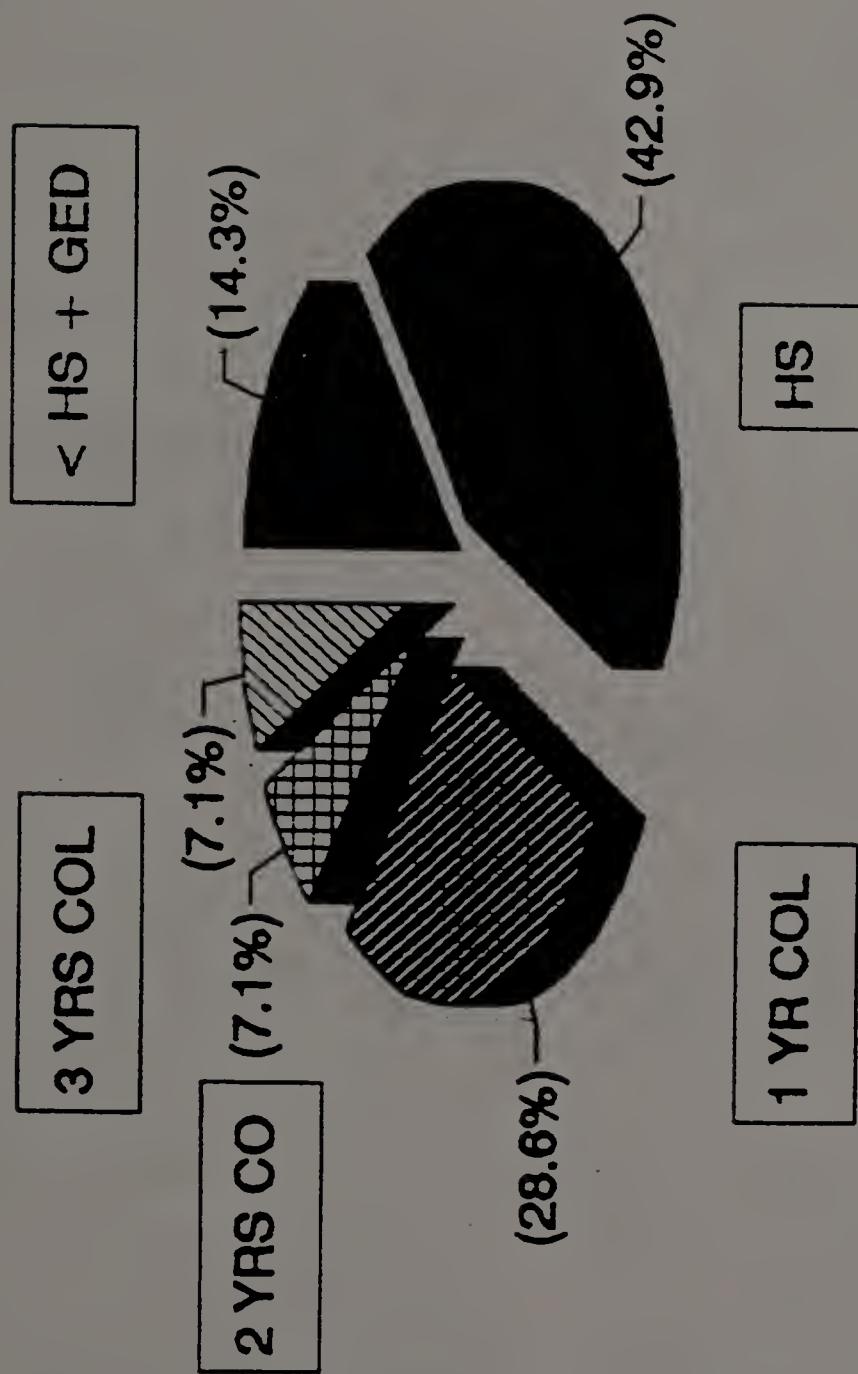


Figure 3. Pre-college grade level of participants.

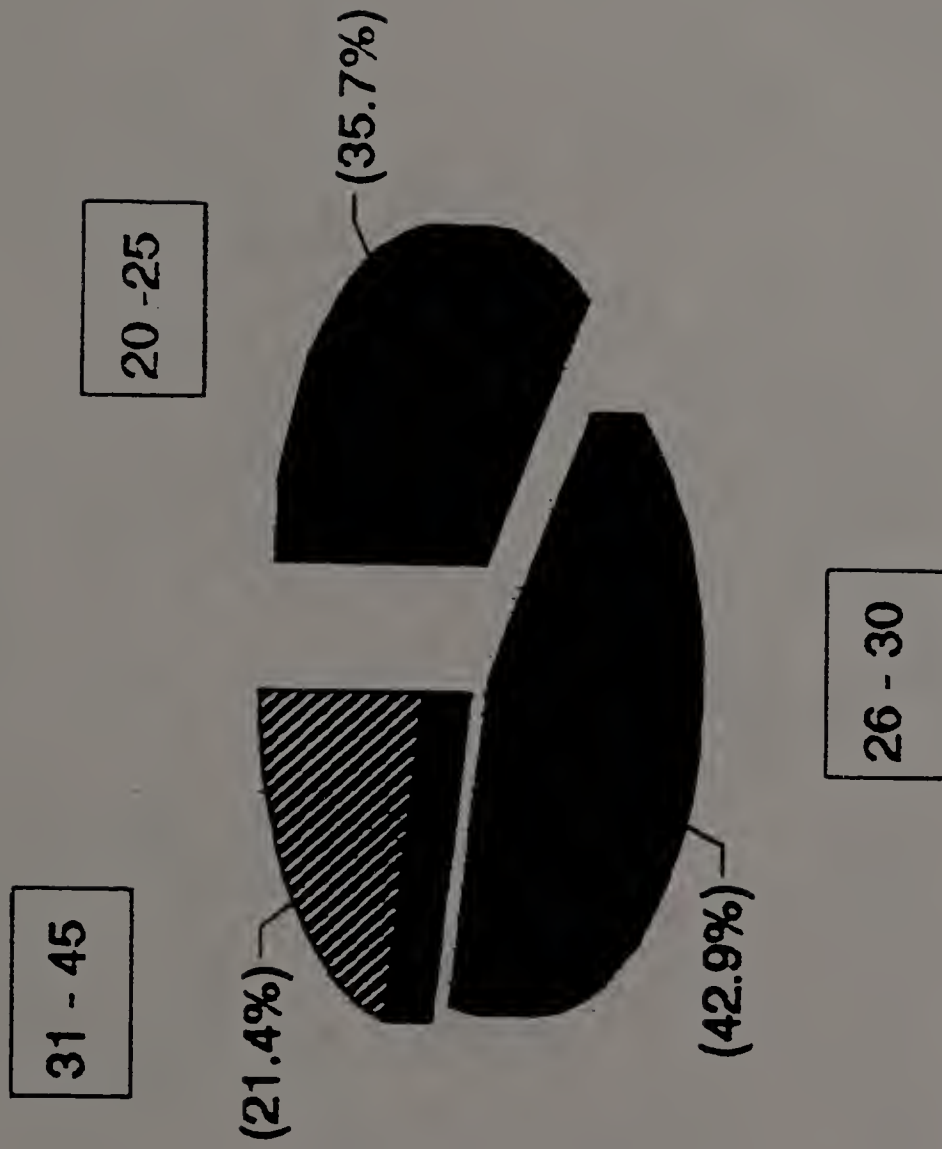


Figure 4. Percentage of participants in each age category.

"hindering factors" and "facilitating factors" pertaining to completing an associate's degree or a certificate program. Research Questions 1-17, listed below, were used as an interview guide. Probe questions were used, when necessary, either to obtain additional information or to make information clearer.

Research Questions

The following questions were used as an interview guide for this study:

1. What were the factors that influenced your decision to enroll in a community college instead of another type of training school?
2. From the point when you informed the Welfare Agency that you wanted to attend a community college for vocational training to the point of college registration, what were some of the hindering and facilitating policy and procedure issues?
3. Did you experience any problems with courses or program selection during the college registration process?
4. Were you able to receive adequate counseling and advisement from the Welfare Agency and the community college in preparing to enter college?

5. What are your experiences with faculty, other students, the administration, and resources at the community college?
6. In what ways are you affected by the college grading system?
7. Do you think, as an AFDC student, that your college experience is different from that of traditional students?
8. Are you receiving adequate support in the way of library services, tutorial help, transportation, and day care?
9. Are there ways that your family facilitated or hindered the process of your going to college?
10. What are the most important helping factors with the college or the Welfare Agency in your process of going to college?
11. What are the most important hindering factors with the college or the Welfare Agency in your process of going to college?
12. What are the most important helping or hindering factors that you experienced with your family?
13. How has the total experience of making application and attending college as an AFDC student made you feel?

14. What do you think this experience means in your life?
15. If you could go back to the very beginning of this experience, what would you do differently?
16. What policy and procedural changes would you recommend for the Welfare Agency and Job Connection Agency?
17. What policy and procedural changes would you recommend to the community college?

Hindering Factors

The Welfare System Communicates Insufficient, Inconsistent, and Conflicting Information. Inconsistent, conflicting, and insufficient information have prevented some AFDC students from completing their degree or certificate programs within the mandated time frame of two or three years. For others, the communication problem has created additional impediments to job training. The Job Connection Training Program, an agency that works with the Welfare Agency to coordinate job training for its clients and the Income Maintenance Office, are responsible for communicating policies and procedures that are necessary for successfully completing a training program. To validate this claim, the verbatim quotes of the individuals participating in this study are presented:

"If you go to the State and tell them that you want to go to school, they're not going to suggest a college or tell you about being able to qualify for financial aid or nothing. They are going to send you to the schools like Data Institute--schools like that. . . . For me, that wouldn't be good because I'm not a business person. If I did go, I wouldn't do well, and I would still end up on the State. I was lucky to find out about financial aid. . . . You have so many different workers. You have this worker here, this worker there, this worker here. One worker is telling you one thing, and another worker tells you something else. . . . It's not consistent."

"Things are working better for me now that I dropped the Job Connection Program. I think if I were still dealing with them, it would be a lot more stress in my life, e.g., I would make an appointment with a worker . . . and when I got to the appointment, she tells me that I needed to bring this, this, this, and this. Then I have to make another appointment. I'm saying, 'Why didn't you tell me what I needed to bring over the phone?' 'I thought I did,' she would say. Now I'm taking time off from my classes and from my work-study job at the college to come down here for this, and accomplish nothing. It was really frustrating and aggravating."

"The first semester, I was put on academic probation. Then the State told me that they couldn't help me anymore."

They did not tell me that I had to keep a 'C' average until I got to that point. They don't tell you things until you get into trouble; and then that's just one more thing you have to worry about."

You don't get all the same communication. One worker will let somebody get pay for their books, then another worker will say I am not going to pay for your books. . . . Then, it's like--What's going on? Why do some students get their books paid for and somebody that really needs their books paid for can't get the money? . . . Yeah, Job Connection gives you too much of a problem, and there is a lack of communication.

Job Connection gives you the run around. When I first applied, they told me that they would pay for my books each semester. When the second semester started, they said we don't pay for books. . . . That type of mix-up happened to a lot of people. . . . They will tell you certain things, but they don't tell you enough. Like they will tell you that you need certain papers. Later they tell you that you need more papers. After going back and forth, they finally paid for my books for the first semester one month after school had started . . . e.g., I had to get a bill from the bookstore indicating what books I needed. When I took it to my worker, she said to take it back and get the college's stamp on the bill. . . . The Welfare will not tell you what you need to know. The way

that I found out the Job Connection would help me with my car insurance, mileage, or bus fare is one day I was at Legal Aid. I read this brochure there that said I was entitled to transportation benefits. I called my worker. She said, 'I'll have to ask my supervisor,' who did verify this information, but that was after I told them."

"I have heard two different stories about what happens if you do not complete your program in three years. One story is, and it's the one I hope is true, if you get a job within six months after graduation, the Welfare will help you to continue college. The other version I've heard--from two different case workers--is that if you don't complete your program within three years, you're just stuck. You won't even get your AFDC check."

"If they don't keep their part of the deal, and you budget yourself so thinly and around what they tell you, and they don't send their money when they promised, it is a worry to you and it can have a distraction on your studies. It can have a bad effect on your child, and your bill. Yes, my daughter knows when things go wrong. I hope when she is older, she'll never have to get involved with the welfare system."

"A contradiction on book payments . . . I was told that I was entitled to \$200.00 a semester from the State to purchase books. I have used the voucher from the State for two semesters. This semester when I went to the bookstore,

they said, 'No, no, no. You can't use the voucher from the State this semester.' They stopped using that system, but nobody had told me that I couldn't get my books through the State."

"The Job Connection worker doesn't know nothing. And a lot of the welfare workers really don't seem to know their jobs. . . . I feel like they should be more informed. . . . It is hard to get information. Granted, I am just a statistic on the welfare role, but I am working my tail-end to get off this program, so the money can go to the State where it belongs."

"They give you 36 months to complete your program, but some women were told that it is only 24 months. I think that Job Connection and the Welfare Agency should be more together. It should not be separate. One agency does not know what the other one is doing. The confusion is immense."

"I don't understand why we can't get it in writing, like a booklet with some of the policies in it. There is nothing in writing. It's all verbal. Like, at first, I told my worker that I wanted to go back to school to get my bachelor's degree. She said okay. Later she told me, 'Things have changed; you have two years to go to college full-time.'"

"I guess my case was unusual. Most people can't get books from the State, but I got them to pay everything,

including tuition, books, and fees. You see, I had defaulted on a college loan before, so I did not qualify for financial aid. All I had to do was to keep a 'C' average."

"It is like everything is a big secret with the welfare. If I am on AFDC, why can't I know everything that is available to me? For example, when I was in my Human Services class, I was supposed to interview a social service agent. So I said, 'Well, I'll interview my case worker and find out about Section 8. So if I ever need it, I'll know.' I called my case worker and he said he was too busy. He said, 'I'll give you my supervisor's number.' So I called the supervisor who said, 'Can you write a letter so I'll know exactly what it's for?' So I wrote him a letter and told him that I was a student at the Community College, and that I needed to interview someone in Welfare Services. I didn't get an answer for about a week. I finally called him back; he told me he had to show it to his boss. Okay, I called him back in a week. He said, 'My supervisor is out of town.' You see, I got the rigamarole for about three weeks. I felt like saying, 'What are you all hiding down there?'"

"I understand that when the Bill (The Welfare Education Reform Bill, 1988) first got started, you could go on for your bachelor's degree as long as your youngest child was not six years old. So, when I first started with the

Welfare, I was under the impression that I would have time to complete my bachelor's. The rule was changed, but nobody told me until I was a year into the program. That is why I started college when my daughter was just months old."

Negative Attitudes Create Roadblocks to Training. The negative attitudes expressed by some of the welfare case workers towards the women in this study are viewed as a hindrance to obtaining their training for future employment. If these attitudes persist, it may undermine the success of the newest National Welfare Education Reform Bill of 1988. It states that "all AFDC recipients whose youngest children are three years of age and are not exempted for other reasons are mandated to participate in vocational training in preparation for future employment."

"I found that my State worker was not encouraging. She had a nasty attitude for one thing. She was always busy. She never had time to really care about my concerns or my needs. It was just like, 'Oh, I have a job to do, so you know I'll do it.' She wouldn't sit down and listen--really listen to what I was saying. . . . Finally, I got funds for child care; but when I got a college work-study job, they cut the child care check from \$75.00 to \$30.00 per week. . . . The workers are rude. They treat you like you're not a part of society. You're poor; you need our assistance. Therefore, you take whatever kind of treatment

we give you. Even the offices are dirty. They don't clean them because they feel like these people are like nobody. I don't think it's fair to treat people like that because they need help. . . . Since I have run into so many road-blocks with them, and they made me feel like nobody, I don't ask them for anything towards my education. Twice a year, I go there for redetermination for income maintenance review. They just want to make sure that everything is still everything. In other words, are you still poor?"

"Attitudes depend on the worker. I have a new worker. She gives me a hard time, period. She has not paid my day care for two months! . . . It has to be paid before Christmas break, or they won't take my daughter back after the holidays. My first Job Connection worker was good. He stuck by me. Tone, she just doesn't understand or does not care."

"I had one worker who told me, 'If you don't know, I have no reason to tell you what you need to know.' I think a lot of the social workers need to change their attitudes. They make you feel like the lowest thing in the world. When they speak to you, they speak like they are speaking to a person with no education, and don't owe you common respect. They speak down to you. They need to train their workers."

"There are many programs out there to help you get off the Welfare, but the workers don't tell you about them."

If you don't seek them out for yourself, you will always be on welfare. . . . Twice a year you have to go down there to be checked out . . . to see if nothing has changed. They say, 'Okay, you can go home now and continue to get your check.' No talk about your future, or what you want to do with your life."

"When I chose to go to college, I believe that my worker was a little intimidated by my education. . . . I don't like to put racism in the midst of anything, but I believe she was a little prejudiced . . . not because I am Black, but it's harder to keep an educated person down. . . . So, this is the attitude that I received from my social worker. I wanted to do better; and her attitude is like, 'Do better? Okay, come on into the program, fill out your contract, I'll sign the papers, and we'll see what you can do.' Okay. When difficulties, trials, and tribulations came my way, she was very insensitive and very inattentive to my needs. God forbid--I pray for anybody whoever gets on the Welfare System."

"I think that some of the workers are just obnoxious. They have an attitude. I don't think it's the policy of the State to be that way. I think it's the workers. . . . They're very rude. They treat you like an idiot. They really do. Like you don't know how to read and write. Like you have no brains."

"I more or less stay away from the case worker. They are so busy; they don't have time for you. And it's just discouraging in a way. You know when you go down there, you feel so good, so high on life about getting an education, and you're really trying to make something of yourself so that you can get off the welfare situation. They kill your spirits; they are not supportive. They're very cold, very blank. Once in a while you will get a good worker, but it's still you're just a number in the file. They could care less which way things go."

"I don't know what their problems are, but over the phone, they can be very rude. There's just something about the whole system; it just seems like it needs a whole overhaul."

"They didn't want to take a chance on me with college because I was Black and I had five children. . . . I went back and forth with them for about six months. Finally, I got the State Welfare to say, okay I could go to college instead of some type of secretarial school or training school."

"The most hindering factor from the Welfare is their attitude and their lack of emotional support. I think it's very hindering, because I think if they provided a little bit more encouragement and support to people who are trying, really trying, and not trying to take advantage . . . when you go in there every six months, or whenever,

it's like they are only trying to find out if you are trying to fraud the State. That's their main concern; not the fact that you are working hard trying to go to school, trying to raise a child. And this is only temporary, and that you are not living on the State forever. This is something that you need until you can better yourself. I think if they were more encouraging to people who are trying, that would help us get off the system faster."

Financial Aid Glitches Create Hindering Factors to Training. Colleges that are late with filling financial aid forms and the late returns of financial aid grants create hindering factors to learning, and even cause road-blocks to completing the associate's degree or certificate program. Even though the National Welfare Reform includes an educational component, which primarily provides day care and transportation, college is made possible for this population through financial aid grants which pay for tuition, books, fees, and other college resources. These students, like other low-income college students, are at a disadvantage if they are unable to purchase books, pay fees, and even purchase simple things as pencils and paper when grants are not received until the end of a semester instead of at the beginning of a semester.

"I qualify for financial aid, but by the time I got the grant, the semester was over. In fact, I had taken my final exams. The college waived the tuition until I got

my grant; but for books and bus fare, I almost didn't make it. . . . I no longer get bus fare from the Welfare because when I changed my major to General Studies, Job Connection dropped me from the program. . . . When classes first started, I had to go to the library and use the books that the teachers had left for reference or use other students' books when they were not using them. . . . I was getting behind in my work. Finally, the Dean of Students gave me a college loan for some of my books. I almost didn't make it."

"Financial Aid Offices need more people to help process the paperwork. We had to wait until the next semester to get our checks. This semester, it was a little better. They came in during the fall semester. It was really tough starting school without books. You get behind very quickly. I think that is the reason I had to drop one of my classes."

"I have had a really hard time with the Financial Aid Office. . . . because when we apply for money, we really need it. . . . They take their sweet time giving us the loan."

"At the college, the Financial Aid Office takes too long to decide who's going to get it and how much you're going to get. It's just too long of a process. You could fall through the cracks while you are waiting for the grant to come."

"Last year, my paperwork, the Pell Grant forms, and everything were all done on February 7. They stamped it that day, and I didn't hear from them 'til September 30. That's when I got my financial aid grant. I had to worry all summer about my tuition . . . how it was going to be paid. I don't understand it. . . . I know from experience that not all the universities take that long for students to get their checks."

"Financial aid, when it's late, can prevent students like us who are on a tight budget from going to school. In fact, I know a few women who had to drop out of college because they could not afford books and things while waiting for their financial aid checks."

Insensitivity of Faculty and Administrators Create a Hindrance to Training. Some faculty and administrators demonstrated a lack of understanding and sensitivity to the differences that some AFDC students bring to the education process. For the women in this study, these attitudes created a hindrance to training.

"A lot of students, including us who are on AFDC, need personal advising before registration and picking a major. Some of us don't know if we are coming or going--like new students should have counseling in the beginning. . . . Like I was saving my field experience classes to the last semester, only to find out that I couldn't take

those two in the same semester, then I couldn't finish in three years."

"The more advanced courses in my program are offered at night. I don't have a car, and the buses don't run at 9:30 p.m. The administration should consider students like us."

"If you are late for class, some faculty won't let you in. They don't have any understanding of what it is like to get up and get two kids ready for the sitter and be on a 7:10 a.m. bus for college. Some of the teachers only allow for two absences. If you have more, they start to drop a letter grade. And with Job Connection, you have to maintain a 'C' in all courses. I feel like if you do your work and pass the exams, they shouldn't punish you if you are late or if you are absent."

"The Financial Aid people are slow in processing your papers. I went into the office to see when I could expect my grant. One of the people in there went off on me. She was rude; she started going crazy. I was afraid to say anything for fear that she might hold my grant up more."

"When I first started at the college, they knew I had to complete my program in two years. I needed four Accounting courses, one every semester. They didn't sign me up for an Accounting course the first semester. The counselors are not very smart. All the good ones left when the State offered an early retirement program. The

Counseling Department is so understaffed; they don't have time to help you."

Welfare Education Policy Prevents Change in Major and Discourages College Transfer Programs. If AFDC students exercise the normal procedure for enrolling in a community college, they make known to their social worker that their choice for training is a college experience. The student is referred to the Job Connection Program for counseling and to sign a training contract that states that the recipient will complete the agreed-upon degree or certificate program within three years. It often happens that after matriculation into a specific program of study, the student finds that it is an inappropriate match for them. The incompatibility creates a natural desire to change their major. In some cases, the students choose another vocational, terminal degree or certificate program. This type of change is met with some acceptance, but the pressure is still on to complete the program within three years. There is no support or assistance for the student if she wants to enter General Education or Liberal Arts as a transfer program. In fact, students are dropped from the Welfare Education Assistance Program altogether if they choose a non-vocational program.

"The instructor who is in charge of Human Services teaches mostly all the classes in the major, and it doesn't leave much room for choices. There might be one course

taught in the day and one at night. That's it. A couple of years ago when the college experienced budget cuts, it seemed like they offered fewer classes in Human Services. I just could not stay in that major, but my worker said that I was under contract and that I could not change even though there was no chance of my completing the program in three years."

"I was in a Business Management Program. I later changed into Human Services because I was not happy in the Business program. My worker wanted me to stay in Business because they said that I would make more money when I finished the degree. I had already changed when I told them about it. They were not happy. I might get dropped from the program."

"When I informed my worker that I wanted to go to college, she said it was okay, but I had to pick a major that would prepare me to get a job right after graduation. I picked Medical Lab Tech. The Educational Associate degree would only prepare me to be a paraprofessional. You see, I wanted to be a teacher. Later I found that I really couldn't work with sick people. . . . I changed my major to General Studies. I feel very satisfied that I made the change even though it has caused a lot of trouble for me. In fact, I was dropped from the Welfare Education Assistance Program."

Lack of Flexibility on Child Care Policy Issues.

Under this program, children are to be cared for in their own home or licensed day care facility. For example, if a neighbor's home is not licensed for day care, they cannot care for the children. Most often due to the lack of transportation, AFDC women have a difficult time with getting a stable child care facility for their children. Child care was a continuing problematic theme throughout the study.

"There is a set pay rate for child care--about \$75.00 per child, per week. But when your classes are at night, you can't find anyone to come to your home for that rate of pay. There should be some consideration for the cost of night."

"I had an argument with my worker last semester because I found a lady for in-house day care. She lived five minutes from the house. My worker wanted me to put my children in a State-run facility or have the lady come to my house. I don't like the State-run places. They yell at the kids; also, they hire high school students to work there. The only trained person is the Director. I could get a job there without any special training or a certificate. . . . I don't want to separate my kids. When they are together, they can look out for each other. My kids were used to this sitter. I don't want to disturb them. It's hard enough that I'm not with them very much. Finally, we worked it out."

"I think they need a better day care program for mothers who can't find a sitter to sit in their house while they are in school. . . . Right now, I let my sitter move in with me. Well, somebody called the State and told them that I'm frauding the Welfare. . . . I need the extra help so that I can do my homework. Now I am being investigated for fraud."

"Before I was dropped from the Welfare Education Assistance Program because I changed my major, I found a sitter for my children but I had to take them to her. The Welfare did not want to pay because she was not licensed. I explained that it was easier for them to go to her. They gave me such a hard time about it until I finally told them that she was coming to my house. Sometimes you have to lie."

Facilitating Factors

Child Care as an Aid to Training. A constant theme throughout the study was the issue of child care. Several participants stated that the problem of finding a suitable day care facility was a separate issue from the Welfare providing funds for child care. Some gave testimony that without the aid for the care of their children, they could not possibly have managed to attend college.

"They gave me day care. I wouldn't have had anybody else; you know, I wouldn't have had any other way."

"The Welfare helped me a lot. Job Connection helped me with child care and transportation. That makes it possible to go to school by Job Connection's child care benefits. There is no way that I could afford it. They pay \$400.00 automobile insurance which enables me to drive my kids to the day care."

Student Action for Mothers in School (SAMS) Club. Two of the colleges have formally organized a Student Action for Mothers in School (SAMS) Club. The women in the club feel that it is the life-line for their staying in college.

"We can help each other with our problems. We can also see that we are not in this alone. It gives us a chance to connect with other students like ourselves."

"Before we organized a SAMS Club, they (Welfare) never came to us and asked us anything. They could make us do anything they wanted us to do on an individual basis. Now, we can band together to fight for our rights. We say this isn't right, this isn't fair, let's do something about it. Now they have to come to us to ask what are the problems, what are the difficulties, what can we do to help."

"SAMS is the most helpful factor. It helps out with stresses. We can go there, sit down, and talk about anything. This is real helpful."

College Support Services. The student participants in this study were found to have a serious need for individual use of various types of college support services. Tutoring,

library services, counseling, and advisement of various types were consistent threads throughout the interviews. Tutoring and library services were often sought for enrichment learning, to fill in the gaps in prior learning, or to update obsolete skills; while advising and counseling of various types were accessed for career and program advising, or personal counseling. The following comments were extracted from the interviews:

"I think the Library and the Learning Center are great. They have more than adequate staff to help you or you can make an appointment to get your needs met."

"The advising program is very good. I sat down with a counselor/advisor and she helped me pick my courses. After that, I pretty much got the hand of how to select my courses. . . . The Library is fine here. It is up to you to make use of it. It is open until 9:00 p.m. and on Saturdays."

"I went to the College Learning Center, and they helped me a lot with a lot of my classes. I really appreciated that. They do have places and facilities that you can go to to get help with your homework if things get rough."

"I usually spend about two hours studying in the Library. As far as the tutoring center, I practically live there."

"The Adults in Transition Program, they're wonderful. I recommend that every student who's been out of school for a while to go through that program. You can get counseling, advising, and they give you a study skills course for a few days before you start school to get you back on track. If you panic, or the pressure gets too much, they are there for you. . . . They go out of their way for women and adults who are coming back to school."

"Some of the counselors tell you about local food shelters. . . . I have used some of the town services as far as food, and free clothing, and things like that."

"The counselors at the college have been very helpful to me. My daughter's father is a drug abuser. It was hard juggling school, taking care of the little children and a relationship with a drug addict. It was really, really hard. One day, I went into the Counseling Center. I told them all about my problems. I go there often. They have helped me a lot."

"The Director of the EOC college program has taken it upon himself to also help women who are on Welfare and City Assistance to decide what they want to do with their lives and to get into college. He helps you fill out financial aid papers. I sent him a letter thanking him, because if it were not for him, I would not be here today."

Financial Aid: A Co-Partner to the Welfare Education Reform Bill. The Welfare Education Reform Bill of 1988 is,

without a doubt, the greatest effort for a long-range solution to educating AFDC recipients in a way that they can exit the Welfare with a more permanent solution to the problem of welfare dependency. This Bill provides child care, transportation, and a few other resources (like books) for the first semester in some cases.

Second to child care funds is that of financial aid. Once these women are able to place their children in a safe, secure facility, they then seek ways to finance their education. Because of their low-income bracket, they usually qualify for a financial aid package that may include Pell grants, work-study, and other grants that make it possible for them to pay tuition and other costs that are associated with college attendance. The Welfare Education Reform Bill of 1988, without Financial Aid, would not make it possible for most recipients to attend college.

"I knew about financial aid from high school. What I didn't know is that I could get financial aid and at the same time be on State Welfare. I thought I couldn't get both together. I didn't think it were possible until one of the counselors told me . . . and that's the thing that a lot of people on welfare don't know."

"I found out about financial aid through counseling at the high school. It would be kind of stupid for me to stay at home and do nothing with my life. This way, I can get a degree and find a better job."

"A Job Connection worker told me that I had to be finished with my certificate program after two years, otherwise they would not continue to help me. Well, that's all right. My child will be in school, and anyway it is Financial Aid that will continue to help me to get my B.S. degree."

"You see, the more you are away from welfare the more you can get from Financial Aid, but you have to maintain a passing grade--a 'C' average."

"My children are older; I don't need child care. They only give me a bus pass. The college gives me financial aid, and that gives me permission to study."

Transportation. The 1988 Welfare Reform Bill includes transportation. It was not a major theme as a helping factor in the study. The beneficial quality of the transportation aid is probably clouded by some of the problems that are associated with obtaining a bus pass, car repairs, car insurance, and problems with inconvenient bus schedules. It is important to include among the interview extracts the participants' comments pertaining to transportation as a helping factor to training:

"The Welfare gave me a bus pass. If I didn't have that, I would not be able to get to college everyday."

"I gave up on the bus pass. To get the bus pass, you have to go down to the State office on the first of the month or a few days after the first. There are thousands

of people who are there in line for the bus passes. When you are in school, it is hard to take that time off-- almost a whole day wasted trying to get a bus pass."

"The bus pass is good for day classes; but for night classes, like when you get out at 9:40 p.m., there's no bus coming to the college. So if you can't get a ride, you can't finish the degree because some of the classes you must have are offered only at night."

"Transportation is so frustrating. You can't own a car that's worth more than a \$1,000; and you can't have more than a \$1,000 savings account. . . . Some of us have to get up at 5:00 a.m. to take one bus after the other to get the kids to the day care and to get to an 8:00 a.m. class. If we had a car, it would help a lot. I can never take advantage of school activities, because a lot of them are at night. The busses don't run at that time, so I can't participate."

"It is hard to figure their mileage system. I think it is 20 cents a mile up to so many miles per day. The Welfare will also help you with your car insurance. They pay \$500.00 per year and car repairs."

Hope for successfully completing the degree or certificate program, hope for a life away from welfare, hope for a better future, and a desire to become contributing, independent women were constant themes throughout this study.

What a College Experience Means
to Welfare Students

The responses from women in this study were all quite similar when asked what going to college meant in their lives. The answers primarily clustered around being hopeful about an opportunity to exit welfare dependency; having become stronger and better able to meet tomorrow's challenges; proud to be educated; a thirst for more education; a chance to show their children that there is another way of life beyond welfare; and to remove the stigma of being a "Welfare Mom". The following summaries from each of the participants will further validate the researcher's understanding and analysis of what an educational experience means in the lives of the women in this study. The personal testimonies are presented with the use of participant identification numbers as listed in Table 1 in Chapter 3.

Participant 0010: "It has made me feel good about myself. I know that I will be graduating from here in May. I am going someplace in life. I will be a better person. I know that I could watch soap operas all day, but I want better for myself."

Participant 0011: "It has made me feel like going out and educating people, especially students in my classes, about what it is like to be on welfare. They don't know that I am on welfare and they talk very badly about AFDC people. They think we have it made. They think we are just

sitting around collecting a check. They don't understand the struggles. This little check will not pay my bills. I feel very bad about being on welfare. I have to hide it from my family. They don't believe in having to go on welfare. I feel like if I had done everything that I should have when I was younger, I would not be on welfare today."

Participant 0012: "You don't have a private life when you are on welfare. The Department of Income Maintenance wants to know everything about your whole life; where every penny you have goes. Even your kids can't work and save money for college. If they do, they will take it out of their Mother's check. That's why I want to get off welfare, and this schooling is going to help me do that."

Participant 0013: "I feel 100 percent better. I feel like I am worth something. I am amazed that I actually made it through the process. There is a lot of struggle to it, but now I feel almost like a sigh of relief since I will be finished in May. I think it means a lot of knowledge for me. It has been a growing experience. Just getting educated is something that I think can't be understood unless you go through the college process yourself. It is just amazing how you feel. No one can tell me that I am not qualified to do certain jobs. I have the knowledge from the paper, and I have the background. That is something I didn't have before."

Participant 0014: "It's a growing stepping stone. I've grown a lot in the past two-and-a-half years by this experience. I had to humble myself. I always thought I would be too proud to go on welfare. But I was also too proud to stay in an abusive relationship with my ex-husband. So of the two worst evils, this one is the better one. My pride had to be put aside. But I have learned academically as well as emotionally. So, I do feel that it has helped me a lot."

Participant 0015: "I feel better about myself now that I am going to college. I am planning on doing great things in the future for my little girl and me."

Participant 0016: "It has been a real humbling experience; a patience builder. It was frustrating at times, but it made me fight to make it."

Participant 0017: "This means that more doors, more opportunities are available for me now. When you go to college, it opens up so many horizons. It makes you realize that being on welfare doesn't help you in the long run; it's a program that keeps you under. It has helped me to be more self-confident, and more self-assured about what I am going to do with my life. I'm getting it done, and then I plan to help someone else to try to change their life too."

Participant 0018: "I want to change the public perception. They think you are just here (in college) because

it's a free ride; and maybe you are just doing 'C' work and just getting by. But I am here because I want to be. I want to get an 'A'. I want to do well because I want to apply to another college to go on and further my education."

Participant 0019: "It has given me a whole new perspective of what I want to do with my life when I get off welfare. . . . This experience has taught me how to budget my money, and how to do a lot with very little."

Participant 0020: "I am looking forward to speaking better English and getting a job. I can help my children do better in school. I am worried a lot. In five years, my youngest will be 18 years. I will be way up in my forties. If I can't get a job, I'll have to go on the City Welfare. They don't pay enough for my rent. I might have to take a low-paying job with no health insurance. I am very worried about my future."

Participant 0021: "I want to get off AFDC because there are so many hassles dealing with them. I am determined to make it."

Participant 0022: "It means I'll have a better life for my kids. I came to school. . . . When things get tough and there are lots of problems, I look at my kids and say, 'I'm doing this for you.' They're not going to live like this all the time. We are going to have a house and a yard someday. I look to the future. That's what

keeps me going. It makes me feel really great about myself."

Participant 0023: "It has changed my life. I am on a new road all together. I am no longer in the welfare hole of going from job to job and back on welfare; just a depressed Mother. I am determined to make it for myself. I have high goals. I hope to buy a farm someday before my children grow up so that they can enjoy another way of life."

Suggestions for Change

As stated earlier in the dissertation, suggestions for welfare and community college policy changes from the participants' viewpoint would be presented. The data for suggested recommendations are shown by using the participants' own words from each of the three composite profile categories. Some of the recommendations in all three age categories are nearly the same, while other suggestions are very different. Age seemed to make a difference in the issues that the recipients chose to focus on which is the reason for presenting the recommendations by age group category.

Profile No. 1: Age Group 20 to 25

- That a manual be published and used as a handbook or guide to avoid some of the mass miscommunication that is

presently going on. All AFDC social workers, Job Connection case workers, and recipients would use this handbook for following the same guidelines for educational training. Student: "Everybody's case workers are not beating on the same drum. If I have three different workers in a three-year period while I am in school, each one would tell me something different about the same thing. I think they just don't know."

- That the community colleges offer mandatory orientation and advisement for all AFDC students. Student: "I thought I knew what I was doing. I was scattering my courses out, so I saved my field experiences to last only to find out that I couldn't take both of them in the same and last semester. This way, I ended up here for an extra semester; and this prevented me from finishing in the three years that Job Connection requires."

- That the community colleges offer core courses during the day. Student: "Without transportation and child care at night, it is impossible to finish my degree in three years when the advanced courses that I need are never offered during the day."

- That study time be included in the Welfare Education Reform. Student: "I have to go home immediately after my last class. They won't pay for child care if I am not in class. I need to go to the Library for

research and to study. When I get home, kids want my attention, and I don't have a quiet place."

- That the college advisors should tell the students what courses will transfer to other colleges and which ones are final degree or certificate programs. Student: "I think that is a big problem for students who want to continue on. The advisors don't know what will transfer and what will not."

- That Connecticut Welfare use the New York system of disseminating the income maintenance checks. Student: "Once you qualify, you are given a check-cashing card that can be presented to any check-cashing center on the designated pay dates. Present your card with proper identification and you will get the amount of money that you qualify to get. This is a better way than having everybody in the building standing around waiting for the mailman for your check."

- That the colleges give the AFDC students a voucher for their books at the beginning of the semester if they qualify for financial aid, especially since the financial aid checks are not received in most cases until the end of the semester. Student: "They need more people to process the paperwork. Students have to wait until the following semester to get their checks. Some of us don't have no other means to buy books. We are behind before we get started."

Profile No. 2: Age Group 26 to 30

- That the social worker and case workers change their negative attitudes toward the AFDC recipients to more positive ones. Sensitivity training would help. Student: "My worker is very insensitive and very inattentive to my needs. They make you feel like you are nobody--less than dirt."

- That the Welfare should have stricter policies about how to get off welfare. Student: "They should have stronger spelled-out stipulations and rules; that way people would have something to try to live up to."

- That the Welfare and Job Connection sponsor forums that allow for communication between the recipients who have completed their training programs and the recipients who are planning to start their training. Student: "Job Connection should have gatherings where the AFDC people who have finished their training and are working could talk to other Mothers and let them know what to expect in a training program. Also, they could see that it is possible to actually get off the system."

- That some of the college faculty and staff become less prejudiced. Student: "Some of the faculty are prejudiced, but especially the people in the bookstore. They are rude and prejudiced. In a very loud voice, they will scream out, 'All you people who are on Job Connection, get in the line over there.' As a matter of fact, they are all White; yes, they are all White. There is no

minority student or anyone in there that is not White."

- That the Job Connection Program should lessen the required full-time status to that of two or three classes per semester when you first begin college. Student: "As it is now, you have to carry a minimum of four classes right from the start in order to finish in three years. Some of us are older and have no idea what college is like, and some of us have five or six children at home and other responsibilities. You end up dropping half the classes because you can't keep up. I think that the Welfare requires the near impossible from their students."

- That the colleges show greater diversity among the faculty and staff. Student: "We were talking the other day on the phone about how many minorities were in our college. I think we came up with 10 out of over 100 people. Only two have a high position, and we don't count one of them because he/she acts too White as far as we are concerned."

- That the child care program include study time in the welfare reform package for education. Student: "It is hard to do homework if your family is always around you."

- That the colleges process the financial aid paperwork early enough to get your check at the beginning of the semester and not at the end of the semester.

- That the Welfare do not penalize working-age children by taking the money they work for to save for college from their Mother's welfare check.

- That Job Connection/Welfare follow-up on their orientation to training with their recipients. Student: "I received a letter from the Welfare saying that I had to start school or get a job. I talked with my worker about going back to college. I was invited to an orientation program that was sponsored by Job Connection. I was real excited. I thought, 'Wow, I'm really going to get into college and someone is going to help me through this.' They said that they would contact me. Everyday I looked for mail. Three weeks went by and nobody called. No contact at all. Then I remembered that someone had come to my GED class to talk about a transitional program that they had at the college for students like me. I called her and that's how I got into college. When I did get a chance to talk with my worker, she said that there was a long waiting list of people who were waiting to get into college, but nobody told me that. . . . Once I was in college, I was able to get college assistance benefits from the Welfare."

- That Job Connection and Welfare agencies merge and consolidate resources. Student: "I have two different workers--one for my income checks and one for going to school. Neither one knows what the other one is doing with me. I think that there is a duplication of effort

in the same building. Sometimes my benefits get all messed up, and that creates lots of problems."

- That you have at least one opportunity to change your major without being penalized and dropped from the program, especially if it is not working out for you.

Student: "The instructor who is in charge of Human Services teaches mostly all the classes and it doesn't leave much room for choices. There might be one course taught in the daytime and one at night. That's it. It seemed like a couple of years ago when the budget was cut, the college started to offer fewer classes in Human Services. I just could not stay in that major, but my worker said that I was under contract and that I could not change even though there was no chance of my finishing in three years."

- That all the colleges have at least one advisor/counselor on campus who specializes in the policies and issues pertaining to the Welfare Education Reform Act.

Student: "I think we need to have somebody that we can consult with that knows how to help us when we have problems. At Mattatuck Community College, they have an advisor who knows everything about the Welfare and the Job Connection Agencies, and those students don't have half the problems that we have."

- That the Welfare help their recipients through a longer period of time to make the transfer from AFDC to the

work force. Student: "Once you get a job, they expect you to be self-sufficient within three months. The first month, they take one-third of your benefits; the second month, they take two-thirds of your benefits; and the third month, they take everything away. Sometimes your job does not pay you enough to pay for your child care and everything else. That's why a lot of parents have to quit their jobs. Some jobs don't have health care plans for your family."

- That all colleges organize a SAMS Club on their campuses. Student: "We can help each other with our problems. We can also see that we are not in this alone. It gives us a chance to connect with other students like ourselves."

- That the college administer a child care program that is designed to care for children while the Mothers are in classes. Student: "I think they need to open a day care program just for Welfare Mothers so they can attend classes. Maybe the Mothers could work in the day care as work-study students."

Profile No. 3: Age Group 31 to 45

- That the college change it's financial aid procedure to include giving vouchers to AFDC students at the beginning of the semester to purchase books and other college-related materials, like calculators, pencils, paper, and notebooks. Student: "I was so worried about how I was

going to pay for my books when classes started. Some of us got behind three or four weeks in our studies before we could arrange to buy books."

- That the instructors become less strict about attendance. Student: "Some teachers take part of a letter grade away if you miss more than three classes during the semester. I don't think that is fair, especially if you are still able to get your work done. Sometimes you have to be out to take care of the kids."

- That every college campus organize a SAMS Club. The members are a great help to each other. They are mostly Welfare Mothers who are trying to get off Welfare.

- That the Welfare continue providing educational assistance to students who want to transfer to a baccalaureate college if they have maintained a high grade point average at the community college. Student: "I was thinking how great it would be if only the Welfare could continue to help those students while they studied for a B.A. degree if they have proven themselves, for example, if they had proven to be serious about school."

- That the Welfare provide assistance to the young women who have graduated from high school, unable to find a job, still living at home, the mother is on welfare. Student: "If you don't have children, you can't get State Welfare, only City Welfare. The City won't help you to go to college. They want the young girls to go to work. That

is okay, but there are no jobs if you have only a high school education. Some of the girls will go get pregnant so that they can get State aid and can help with going to college."

C H A P T E R 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter includes a summary of the study purpose, procedures, and results. Further, conclusions are drawn from a combination of the composite profiles, themes, meanings that participants made of their experience, and the study groups' recommendations for policy changes to the community colleges and the Welfare organization. Finally, recommendations for further study will be presented.

Summary

The Welfare organization has had many reforms since its inception in 1825. Until recently, the reforms have all dealt with basic income maintenance and very short-term training programs, such as typing and data entry. The last national reform, The Welfare Family Support Act (which occurred in 1988 and was implemented in Connecticut in 1989), had an education component that would provide up to three years of education assistance for its recipients. This Act has created an opportunity for tens of thousands of Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) recipients to attend college. In fact, the Act mandates that all persons who are on welfare maintenance whose youngest children are age three years or older must participate in a vocational training or

basic skills program unless they are exempt for some reason. The majority of the students have chosen a community college for their training, and for very good reasons. The data revealed that all of the women in this study were restricted from attending a baccalaureate college or university because of financial or family reasons.

Community colleges originated in 1902 primarily for the purpose of offering vocational and commerce training. Since the beginning, like the Welfare System, it too has experienced many reforms to the point that most community colleges have become comprehensive colleges, and are offering two-year liberal arts transfer programs. However, vocational educational degree and certificate programs are still one of the college's major functions. The purpose of this study has been to contribute to the body of knowledge pertaining to welfare education reform for its recipients who are studying at community colleges. To this end, an examination of the facilitating and hindering factors relating to completing an associate's degree or certificate program has been studied.

The phenomenology technique, developed by Schutz (1967), as an appropriate research method to study social science problems, was used for collecting and analyzing the data. First, a Participant Information Form (see Appendix C) was developed to collect data pertaining to personal characteristics which were later used in part for

constructing the composite profiles that were presented in Chapter 4. Second, an Interview Guide (see Appendix D) containing 17 questions relating to the experiences being studied was developed. Fourteen AFDC women students at four community colleges in Connecticut participated in the study. Two interview sessions were scheduled during a four-month period of time at mutually agreeable times and places for the participants and the researcher. The options of interviewing at the college where the student was enrolled, in the home, or at another conducive place were offered to the interviewees. Three of the women chose their homes, and 11 of the women chose various places in the colleges for interviews.

During the first session, the researcher established a rapport and a comfortable relationship with the student by carefully reviewing the purpose of the study, and by engaging in some discussion while the student filled out the Participant Information Form. Also, the interviewing process was discussed. For example, the women were told that the questions were open-ended, and that probe questions would be used only to clarify or gain additional information to better understand the subject being discussed. Finally, the researcher explained that her job would be limited to asking the questions and to listen while she spoke openly about her experience of being an AFDC student enrolled at a community college. The

participants were able to discuss the realities of a lived experience, thus allowing the researcher to adopt the "insider's viewpoint". Enough time was allowed in the second interview to complete all 17 questions from the Interview Guide. An appreciation gift of \$10.00 was given to each participant at the conclusion of the interview.

The interviews were transcribed and entered into a computer. A computer software package, "Microsoft Word", was used to search for all information relating to a given theme. Using basic computer knowledge, the computer was programmed to call up information by a single word or by multiple words in the entire text. After the computer sorted the themes by category, it was programmed to print only the text pertaining to the specifically-requested theme.

To be consistent with the purpose of this study, which was to examine the facilitating and hindering factors pertaining to AFDC women completing an associate's degree or certificate program at a community college, the researcher analyzed the "themes" by hindering and helping factors. Six hindering themes relating to the education process emerged; namely, "The Welfare System Communicates Insufficient, Inconsistent, and Conflicting Information"; "Negative Attitudes Create Roadblocks to Training"; "Financial Aid Glitches Create Hindering Factors to Training"; "Insensitivity of Faculty and Administrators

Create a Hindrance to Training"; "Welfare Education Policy Prevents Change in Major and Discourages College Transfer Programs"; and "Lack of Flexibility on Child Care Policy Issues". Five helping themes to the educational process emerged from the data; namely, "Child Care as an Aid to Training"; "Student Action for Mothers in School (SAMS) Club"; "College Support Services"; and "Financial Aid: A Co-Partner to the Welfare Education Reform Bill".

Since the women in this study are among the first group of AFDC recipients to attend college under the national welfare education reform, it was important to understand what their education experience meant to them. They were asked that specific question during their interviews, and each answer was presented in their own words.

It is often customary for the researcher to propose all recommendations for change to the persons or organizations being studied. In the case of the phenomenological study where it was critical to learn from the participants' lived experiences, one of the Interview Guide's questions was, "After going through the experience of being an AFDC student at a community college, what policy changes would you recommend to these two organizations?" The results of their recommendations to the Welfare and Community College organizations were presented in Chapter 4. The researcher's recommendations will be summarized in Chapter 5.

A large amount of qualitative data, which resulted from the written interview transcripts, provided the basis for a thorough descriptive analysis of the facilitating and hindering factors to welfare women completing an associate's degree or certificate program at a community college.

Conclusions

The qualitative, phenomenological approach using in-depth interviewing as the research method provided an effective way to study the factors that hinder or facilitate completion of vocational training for welfare women at a community college.

The "themes" which emerged from the data are ones which have been discussed extensively in Chapter 4, "Presentation and Discussion of Research Results." These themes were analyzed from a hindering or facilitating viewpoint. Themes that were considered to be of an impeding nature were, in broad terms, "Communication", "Negative Attitudes", "Financial Aid Glitches", "Insensitivity of Faculty and Administrators", "Rigidity of Welfare Education Policy", and "Child Care". Additionally, five "beneficial" themes emerged. Specifically, they were: "Child Care", "SAMS Club", "Support Services", "Financial Aid: A Co-Partner to Welfare Reform", and "Transportation". The conclusions will draw heavily upon the above-mentioned themes, but will

also include data from the composite profiles and from the question of what the total experience means to the women in this study. There is no prioritized order to the themes. Each one holds equal weight in the education process.

The use of Schutz's (1967) phenomenological techniques, where the participant can speak freely from their stream-of-consciousness of a lived experience, provided a large amount of data from which several conclusions can be drawn. These conclusions regard factors which had a positive or negative impact on AFDC recipients who are attending a community college under the most recent welfare education reform. A discussion of these follow.

The research findings in this study support Sidel (1986) in her claim that most AFDC recipients begin their families at a very young age, and most are ready to make the transition off welfare long before the age of forty. It was found that almost 79 percent of the women in this study were in a vocational training program for the purpose of making the transition from the Welfare System to the Workplace. Only 21 percent of the women in this study were 31 to 45 years of age. Of all the aforementioned hindering factors, three themes emerged as not only recurring but, even more significantly, fixable. Broadly, these themes are "The Welfare Organization Communicates Information"; the Welfare Organization conveys "Negative Attitudes" towards its recipients, and "Insensitivity of Community

College Faculty and Staff" towards the needs of AFDC students.

In the area of communication, the researcher found that inconsistent, conflicting, and insufficient information from the Welfare System have prevented some AFDC women from obtaining their degrees or certificates of training; and for others, communication problems have caused additional impediments to job training. The data indicated that it was possible to have three different case workers over a three-year period of being in college. This is the time period allotted for educational assistance under the new reform, and each one of the case workers transmits insufficient, inconsistent, or even conflicting information on issues such as tuition or book reimbursement, financial aid, child care, or transportation. Because of this, many of these students spend too much unnecessary time. In fact, much of the time spent waiting in line prevents them from attending classes. The sense of frustration the participants have experienced has caused some to reevaluate their priorities for staying in college; in fact, some had to drop the Welfare Education Assistance Program.

Case workers' negative attitudes was the second major theme that has become an obstacle to job training for some AFDC recipients. The attitudes ranged from lack of interest and support for the students' future plans, to

failure to provide helpful job training information, to being rude enough to severely dampen the spirits of the women who are trying to free themselves from welfare. Several students concluded that their social workers and case workers resented the idea that they were trying to rise "above their station" in life with the use of welfare funds. If the analysis is correct, it is very short-sighted. These women are trying to better themselves by going to college, which ultimately means that they too can enter the work force.

After careful scrutiny, it appeared that insensitivity or lack of understanding on the part of college faculty and administrators was the third major theme which impeded the welfare students' completing their training programs within the designated three-year time frame. They are incorrectly advised about course sequencing; and core courses are often only offered at night when there is no bus transportation to the college, and child care is hard to obtain. Faculty members will often drop a letter grade or a portion of a grade if a student is absent more than three times. This type of policy does not consider the many obstacles that may cause a welfare mother to be absent, even though she may be able to study on her own, or seek convenient tutorial help. Although the Reform Bill was implemented by most states in 1989, there is strong evidence to suggest that communities are still not psychologically or physically

equipped to execute the program of the Reform Bill smoothly.

While all the identified themes play a major role in hindering or helping these students stay in college, the researcher interpreted that "Financial Aid as a Co-Partner to Welfare Education Reform" and "College Support Services" are key facilitating factors to their staying in college.

The Welfare Education Reform Act should be communicated as a co-partner to financial aid that together would enable an AFDC recipient to attend college. The data pointed out that some of the women (especially the women who were not recent high school graduates) did not know about financial aid for a college education. The Welfare Education Reform Act provides transportation and child care. Without the help of financial aid, most recipients could not pay for tuition, books, and fees from their maintenance checks. The data indicate that the education reform, especially the child care component for students, is indisputably the greatest effort for a long-range solution toward helping recipients break the binding chains of welfare dependency.

The second beneficial theme of college support services, such as tutoring, library services, counseling, advising, and organized, college-supported clubs, were found to be a consistent motivation for staying in college.

Many of the students started college with insufficient or obsolete basic skills. The tutorial services offered by the community colleges help the students to catch up on remedial skills and to stay abreast of assignments. The library services were found to be very valuable because, in most cases, it offered these women a quiet sanctuary in which to study--an impossibility when she returned home to her children. Though counselors and advisors are not up-to-date on the policy issues of the Welfare Education Reform, they were found to be helpful with personal counseling and advising. The SAMS Club membership is comprised of mothers in college. The members represent a great resource for each other in the way of child care, transportation, and emotional support.

Finally, the researcher concludes from the global data compiled for this study that the Welfare Education Reform Bill of 1988 is likely to fail all its beneficiaries if the major hindering factors are not recognized, scrutinized, and amended immediately; and the other less impactful, but important, hindering factors are not amended in the near future. If this is not done, the group that will be most victimized will be those women whose youngest children are age three or above, and who are not exempted for other reasons. This is because they are mandated to participate in vocational training or a basic skills program. If they do not complete the program within the designated

three-year time period, they are dropped from the training program.

Due to the conflicting communication problem within the Welfare organization, the recipients were not sure what the next course of action would be. Some thought that they would be cut off AFDC, while others understood that if they did not finish vocational training in the prescribed time frame, that nothing would happen. In other words, there were no consequences for not completing their training programs.

According to the findings of this study, the reforms need to focus on the Welfare System's internal, administrative structure and policies, case workers' attitudes towards the recipients, and better communication, before this national reform has a chance to meet its objective of moving recipients from welfare checks to workplace payrolls. Also, if community colleges are going to be one of the main training institutions, reform must occur within these colleges in order to establish a cohesive, workable program that meets the educational needs of this new subculture. A common thread consisting of willingness, preparedness, and flexibility on the part of all those who are empowered to administer services to these students must be weaved throughout to create a binding cloth, all working together for the same cause of getting these women prepared to make the transition from welfare payrolls to the work force.

There is an assumption drawn from the data that if these women were treated as valued human beings in society, they may experience greater success with completing their vocational training programs.

Recommendations

Reform

The following delineates the researcher's recommendations for reform for the community colleges and the Welfare System:

1. The Government needs to reevaluate the required qualifications for welfare at both the local and state levels. When a young woman completes high school, she is cut off the mother's State AFDC. If she is unable to find a job, often due to the lack of vocational training, she must go to City Welfare. The City Welfare in Connecticut does not have an Education Assistance Program that helps women attend a community college for vocational training. Many young women who find themselves trapped in a situation like this will bear a child in order to qualify for AFDC. She is then eligible for State Welfare assistance and she can get into the Welfare Education Assistance Program. In fact, she would be mandated to go to school when the child is three years old. The Welfare Education Assistance Program would then help to free her from the very system

that forced her to have a child in order to become a part of it. This is ridiculously counterproductive.

2. The major communication gaps and eventual lapses could be amended by implementing the following:

a. Produce a manual that outlines the policies and procedures for participating in the education program. Distribute it to social workers, case workers, community colleges and other training institutions for counselors and other service providers, and students. This will alleviate conflicts regarding, for example, the designated time period to finish the program, reimburseable transportation expenses, book payments, etc. This manual should be reprinted every time there are major policy changes or welfare reforms that would affect the job training program.

b. Both the Welfare and the Community College organizations should administer a required orientation program that is tailored specifically for students in the AFDC program.

3. While it is difficult to change the negative, antagonistic side of a person's psyche, it is possible to create an environment that fosters civility. Perhaps an incentive program could be implemented that rewards the workers by being chosen as "Social Worker or Case Worker of the Month". An Education Assistance Program for welfare workers, and a case bonus or an extra vacation day for each AFDC participant who they helped successfully complete

their training program and obtain a job are examples.

However, the idea is to create an incentive program for the welfare worker who helps his/her recipient succeed. Likewise, a social worker or case worker's work actions should be monitored, and if found to be acting inappropriately, he/she should be dealt with for inappropriate actions.

4. If a student does not complete their vocational training in the designated three years, it should be proven without a doubt that it was not due to a glitch in either the Welfare System or the community college. If it is not the fault of the student for not finishing on time due to pre-designated hindering factors, she should be given an extension to allow time to complete the Vocational Training Program. If not completing the program on time is found to be the fault of the student, some reduction in AFDC payments would seem appropriate or another action that would indicate to the student that this is a serious reform.

5. Financial aid problems seem to center around getting the massive paperwork done in a timely manner. It would seem that if the college administration recognized that without the financial grants, many students fall through the cracks, they would find ways to add to the staff to help execute the process. Students are unable to get books at the start of the semester, therefore they get behind in assignments. Most often the grant is not

received until near the end of the semester. This is much too late for studnets like AFDC recipients who are seriously in need. Even though it would create additional paperwork, all AFDC students should be granted a book voucher at the beginning of the semester. They have no other means for books.

6. Clearly, the transit authorities' bus schedules will not be changed to accommodate these students, but the colleges could offer core classes needed to complete a program during the day, rather than at night when there is no public transportation to the college. Also, these women would need child care in order to attend night classes. Usually, night child care is not available; and if it is, it is very expensive.

Additionally, the researcher agrees with one of the participants who said, "If you do the work and pass the exams, they shouldn't be penalized for being late to class or being absent from class." Faculty and administrators ought to be more sensitive and flexible towards the diversity of students and the issues that they struggle with while attending college.

7. There should be no differentiation of lines at the bookstore for AFDC students, just as there is none for food stamps at the supermarket. To single these students out communicates to the student that you are different. When you are different, you may or may not have the same

opportunity to succeed as other students. It seems that an inclusive attitude is needed, rather than an exclusive attitude.

9. Finally, the State Welfare should set up an advisory council to monitor the program, and to make recommendations for policies at the local level. It seems that the council would be best served if it included former AFDC students, social workers/case workers, Job Connection employees, and community college and other training institution personnel.

It may appear at first glance that these recommended reforms would be difficult and/or expensive to execute. Most of the suggestions simply require an investment of time or prioritizing of time and commitment. Some of these recommendations could be accomplished with the redirecting of funds. Even if funds are required to implement some of the recommendations above, as well as others to make the Welfare Education Reform work smoothly, the investment should yield excellent long-term benefits.

Further Research

As mentioned in the content of this dissertation, recommendations for further study would be presented. Based on the findings and new awareness from this research, the following topics are suggested. These suggested topics

would provide a more global view of what is needed for Welfare Education Reform:

- There is a need to conduct a study with a group of women welfare recipients who have completed their associate's degree or certificate program to determine what the issues are in making the transition from welfare to the work force.

- There is a need to conduct a comparative study to this research with AFDC men students at community colleges under the benefits of the Welfare Education Reform Bill.

- The National Welfare Family Support Act of 1988 states that all AFDC recipients whose youngest child/children are age three and are not exempted for other reasons must participate in vocational training or general education programs. There is a need to conduct a study with subjects who are in this category, but who have not started any type of training program to determine the reasons why.

- There is a need to conduct a study to determine to what extent the State Welfare organizations are able to adhere to the mandates of the Federal Education Reform Act of 1988.

- There is a need to conduct a phenomenological study with women who are attending baccalaureate colleges and universities under the benefits of the Welfare Education Reform Act.

- There is a need to conduct a study to determine to what extent the Welfare organization and higher education institutions are able to work in concert to establish policies to meet the educational needs of this fast-growing group of non-traditional students.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

To Participants in This Study:

I, Mary Remona Martin, am a graduate student at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. I am conducting a doctoral research study on "Facilitating and Hindering Factors Pertaining to Completion of an Associate Degree or Certificate Program: A Phenomenological Study of Welfare Women in a Community College."

You are one of approximately 14 individuals who will take part in this study. You are being asked to participate in two sessions--one will be a "get-acquainted session" and the other will be an in-depth interview.

During the first session, you will be asked to fill out the Participant Information Form, you will receive more information on the need and purpose of this research study, and a time and place for the in-depth interview will be scheduled. An "Interview Guide" will be used to focus our interview. The questions will focus on your reflecting and talking about your experience as a Welfare woman student in a community college, and what that experience means to you in your life.

I will ask you a structured question to focus the interview, and occasionally I will ask questions for clarification or further understanding. My role, however, will be to listen as you reflect and recreate your experience.

The interviews will be audiotaped, and later transcribed and analyzed to compose a written report that will be presented to my doctoral committee. I will be committed to confidentiality in all written and oral presentations in which I might use materials from your interviews. I will not use your name, the names of people close to you, or the name of your college. All transcripts will be typed with initials to replace the use of proper names. In the final report, pseudonyms will be used for the interview material.

You may at any time withdraw from the interview process. You may withdraw your consent to have specific excerpts used if you notify me at the end of the interview series. In addition, you will receive \$10.00 in appreciation for your participation in this research study.

In signing this form, you are assuring me that you will make no financial claims against me or the University of Massachusetts for the use of the material in your interviews.

Additionally, you are stating that no medical treatment will be required by you from the University of Massachusetts should any physical injury result from participating in these interviews.

* * * * *

I, _____, have read the above statement and agree to participate as an interviewee under the conditions stated above.

Signature of Participant

Date

APPENDIX B

PARTICIPANT SIGN-UP SHEET TO INTERVIEW
FOR A RESEARCH PROJECT

PARTICIPANT SIGN-UP SHEET TO INTERVIEW
FOR A RESEARCH PROJECT

My name is Mona Martin. I am a graduate student at the University of Massachusetts. I would like to interview a small group of AFDC students for a research project. If you decide to interview with me, your name will not appear in any written report.

Please call me at _____ and leave your name and a telephone number where I can reach you to set up an appointment with you.

OR

Write your name and telephone number on this form and give it to your Director, or Advisor. He/she will forward it to me.

Name:

Telephone Number:

APPENDIX C
PARTICIPANT INFORMATION FORM

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION FORM

Name: _____ Date: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Date of Birth: _____ (Optional)

1. Name of community college you attended: _____

2. Enrolled in: (Please check the appropriate category)

_____ Associate Degree

_____ Certificate Program

_____ Other (Please describe: _____)

3. What was your educational goal when you entered college?

4. Previous educational attainment (number of years in school): _____

5. Last year attended before entering college as an AFDC student: _____

6. Received:

_____ Diploma

_____ Certificate

_____ GED

_____ Other

7. When did you enter the community college: _____
8. Are you in the first half _____ or second half _____ of your program.
9. When are you scheduled to complete your degree or certificate program: _____
10. Are you presently a recipient of the AFDC:
_____ Yes _____ No
11. How many children do you have: _____
12. How old is the youngest: _____
How old is the oldest: _____
13. What is your marital status: (Optional)
_____ Married
_____ Separated
_____ Divorced
_____ Single

A contact where you can be reached in case of change of address or telephone number:

Name: _____

Telephone Number: _____

You will receive \$10.00 at the end of your interview.

Thank you for taking the time to fill out this form.

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW GUIDE

INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. What were the factors that influenced your decision to enroll in a community college instead of another type of training school?
2. From the point when you informed the Welfare Agency that you wanted to attend a community college for vocational training to the point of college registration, what were some of the hindering and facilitating policy and procedure issues?
3. Did you experience any problems with courses or program selection during the college registration process?
4. Were you able to receive adequate counseling and advisement from the Welfare Agency and the community college in preparing to enter college?
5. What are your experiences with faculty, other students, the administration, and the resources at the community college?
6. In what ways are you affected by the college grading system?
7. Do you think, as an AFDC student, that your college experience is different from that of traditional students?
8. Are you receiving adequate support in the way of library services, tutorial help, transportation, and day care?
9. Are there ways that your family facilitated or hindered the process of your going to college?

10. What are the most important hindering factors with the college or the Welfare Agency in your process of going to college?
12. What are the most important helping or hindering factors that you experienced with your family?
13. How has the total experience of making application and attending college as an AFDC student made you feel?
14. What do you think this experience means in your life?
15. If you could go back to the very beginning of this experience, what would you do differently?
16. What policy and procedural changes would you recommend for the Welfare Agency and the Job Connection Agency?
17. What policy and procedural changes would you recommend to the community college?

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